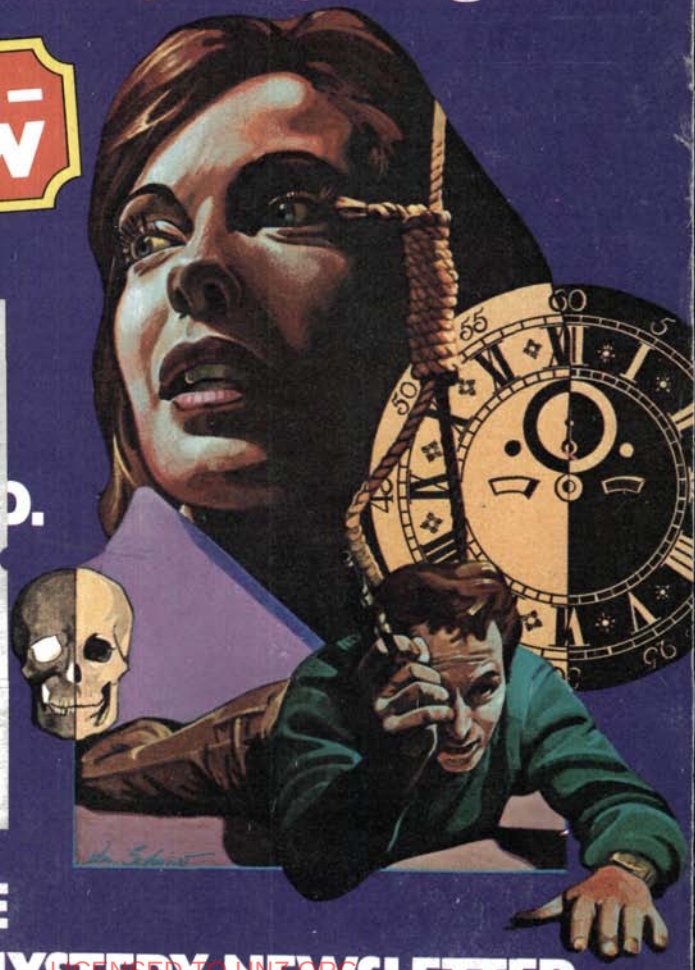
THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

160 PAGES

SEPTEMBER 1976 $1.00
#394 UK 50p

15 stories – 14 NEW



STANLEY
ELLI
ELL
QU
EDW D.
HO
TH
WA
CEL
FRI
BARRY
PEROWNE
and EQ's MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

27 43 7474 ROYSTANFH-O MAR77
PROF HALSEY ROYDEN
STANFORD MATH DEPT
STANFORD UNIV CA 94305

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRE-PUBLICATION REDUCED PRICE

by ordering now you save 50 cents per copy
with this special mail-order offer!

the 32nd
anniversary edition
of

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY ANTHOLOGY

Take your seat—keep the bright lights on—and watch the curtain go up on 19 spellbinding performances.

2 Short Novels by Erle Stanley Gardner
and by Q. Patrick (Patrick Quentin)

2 Novelettes by Cornell Woolrich
and by Stanley Ellin

15 Short Stories by J. J. Marric (John Creasey), Edward D. Hoch, Nicolas Freeling, Michael Gilbert, Joe Gores, Gerald Kersh, Nedra Tyre, Patricia Highsmith, Phyllis Bentley, Julian Symons, Clayton Rawson, Ellery Queen, Lawrence Treat, James Holding, and Lael J. Littke.

On sale September 16—but your advance copy shipped by August 18th!

PAY ONLY $1.70 NOW! LATER YOU'D PAY $2.20.

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 35
FOR YOUR ORDERING COUPON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The World's Leading Mystery Magazine

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine

GENERATION GAP	Stanley Ellin	6
THE COINSHOOTER	Edward Wellen	20
AN OLD AMERICAN CUSTOM	Joyce Higman	27
THE REPORT CARD	Joyce Higman	30
FALL GUY	Thomas Walsh	36
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	Robert Edward Eckels	50
THE OUTSIDER	Jerrold Phaon	59
ADVENTURE OF THE DISORIENTED DETECTIVE	Jon L. Breen	67
ADVENTURE OF THE HONEST SWINDLER	Ellery Queen	73
RAFFLES ON THE RIVIERA	Barry Perowne	85
SOUND OF A DISTANT ECHO	Dorothy Benjamin	101
THE SHREW	Dorothy Benjamin	110
IOU ONE LIFE	William Bankier	118
DANGEROUS SPORT	Celia Fremlin	129
PROBLEM OF THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE	Edward D. Hoch	140
MYSTERY NEWSLETTER	Otto Penzler & Chris Steinbrunner	77

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER: *Joel Davis* **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**: *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 68, No. 3, Whole No. 394, SEPT., 1976. Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc., at $1.00 a copy. Annual subscription $14.00 in U.S.A., $15.20 in U.S. possessions and Canada; $16.40 in the Pan American Union and in all other countries. Editorial and Executive Offices, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2600, Greenwich, Ct. 06830. Second-class postage paid at N.Y., N.Y., and additional mailing offices. *© 1976 by Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope, the Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.*

B. G. DAVIS, *President, Chairman of the Board (1957—1972)*

VICTOR C. STABILE, *Vice Pres. & Treas.* — LEONARD F. PINTO, *Vice Pres. & General Manager*
ELEANOR SULLIVAN, *Managing Editor* — CONSTANCE DIRIENZO, *Exec. Sec., Rts & Perm. Mgr.*
JIM CAPPELLO, *Advertising Mgr.* — HUI WANG, *Production Dir.* — IRVING BERNSTEIN, *Art Dir.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

take your pick of the latest, the best...

Any 6 for just when you join

If the bestsellers you like most are suspense thrillers and mysteries, The Mystery Guild offers you more for your money than any other book club. Start by taking any 6 hardcover books for $1 (in publishers' editions, they might have cost you as much as $50 or even more). As a Mystery Guild member you'll continue to select the new whodunits and suspense bestsellers you want from authors like Christie, Ambler, Kemelman, MacInnes—generally for as little as $1.98.

HOW THE CLUB PLAN WORKS

When accepted as a member, you first get the six books you've chosen for only $1 plus shipping and handling. If not delighted, you may return them within 10 days, cancel your membership and owe nothing.

Then, about every four weeks (14 times a year), you receive the Club's free Announcement describing the 2 Featured Selections and Alternates. At least one of the two Selections each month is only $1.98 plus shipping and handling. Other extra-value selections are slightly higher but always much less than Publishers' Editions.

To receive the 2 Featured Selections, do nothing. They will be shipped automatically. If you desire Alternate Selec-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

99¢

tions or no book at all, just state your choice on the form supplied and return it so that we may receive it by the date specified. This date gives you at least 10 days to decide. If for any reason you have less than 10 days and receive any unwanted Selection, you can return it at Club expense.

You need take only four books in the coming year to complete your commitment and may resign any time thereafter.

The Mystery Guild offers its own complete hardbound selections, sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save members even more.

Note: All prices quoted are for publishers' editions. First number listed is the order number.

55MG39

THE MYSTERY GUILD

Dept. KR190, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

I agree—there's never been a better time to join The Mystery Guild. Please accept me as a member and send me the six books numbered in the boxes. Bill me just $1 plus shipping and handling. I need take only four books, at regular low club prices, in the coming year to complete my commitment and I may resign any time thereafter. I agree to the Club plan as described in this advertisement. NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, return everything in 10 days and owe nothing.

Mr.
Mrs. _____
Miss (Please print)

Address _____ Apt. #____

City & State _____ Zip _____

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Toronto. Offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

STANLEY ELLIN

Stanley Ellin's annual story, written especially for EQMM . . . a contemporary story that will make you ponder and reflect after you have finished reading it. What is *the generation gap? Who caused it—the children or the parents? How does it manifest itself—through the truth or through lying? Who can bridge the gap—the young ones or the old ones? And then there is the eternal question: Is anything, from generation to generation, really what it seems to be?*

GENERATION GAP

by STANLEY ELLIN

She had been named Elizabeth, but it very soon became Bitsy, and Bitsy it stayed even after she got her growth. Which was a drag, but not so much of a drag that you couldn't live with it. Matter of fact, this was how just about everything in the whole world shaped up: a drag, but not so much of a drag that you couldn't live with it. And when you really started to go down, down, down, there was always The Sound—the delicious blast of it on transistor or stereo—to help pick you up again. Life, let's face it, was at its best when it was strictly audio.

At sixteen, Bitsy just about had her growth. An Aquarius, tall, skinny, and, from the front at least, straight up and down. From the back—well, a few of the boys in school had already let her know that, walking away from them in those jeans, man, she really turned them on. Also, she had that straight blonde hair coming almost down to the handworked leather belt, and those big pale blue eyes—made all the bigger when she laid on the eyeliner and eyelash darkener—and a cute nose, and what with one thing and another she was, as she admitted to herself, definitely on the up side. That is, allowing for some minor skin trouble now and then.

© *1976 by Stanley Ellin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of course, it still didn't put her in a class with Sis, a ripe twenty, front and back. And, add to the injustice of it, Sis was born with brains enough for two which, as Pa kept pointing out, was a lucky thing because Bitsy herself didn't have brains enough for one. Big joke. But one had to face the facts. There was Sis, out of high school and right into that filing and typing job at the Fort Myers Citizens Bank, and here was Bitsy who could just about make it through roll call in school before the fog set in.

What made Sis bearable at all, really, was that she still had one foot on the right side of the generation gap. There were signs she was already starting to go uptight like Ma and Pa, but she sometimes did remember how it had been for her four years ago and sometimes even acted like a True Friend. Take hitchhiking. Ma and Pa were death on hitchhiking. Somehow they had got it into their pointy little heads that the world was full of evil men just itching to hand lollipops to little girls and then rip them off. But until she had put together enough money to get her own car, Sis had hitchhiked, and while Ma and Pa had never known about it, Bitsy had. And now Bitsy hitchhiked, and Sis knew about it, and, True Friend, kept her mouth shut about it.

Well, except for one time.

That was the time Bitsy had hitched all the way back home alone from that Disneyland weekend with some girl friends and had carelessly let herself be dropped off at the shopping plaza just when Sis was parking in the plaza one jump away. Sis had ordered her into the car and cut loose then and there. "Was that messy stud with the pickup the one who got you back to town?"

"Mmm," said Bitsy.

"Then you listen to me. Are you listening?"

"Mmm."

"There's plenty of family folks on the road to ride with, and from now on that's who you ride with, stupid. No more studs like that, you hear?"

"Mmm," said Bitsy. She reached out to switch on the radio, but Sis pushed her hand away from it. Bitsy leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes. It wasn't all that hard to get The Sound in your head without even switching on the radio.

"Are you still listening?" Sis said slowly and loudly.

"Mmm."

"Then no more studs, you hear? And another thing. If somebody stops, and you see a six-pack right there on the seat, you stay

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clear, because it could mean trouble. From now on, family folks only, you hear?"

"The way you talk," Bitsy said tiredly, "how can I help hearing?"

Sis often spoke like that to her, a little too slow, a little too loud, the way you'd talk to somebody who was deaf. Or, let's face it, somebody who was so fuzzy in the brain that she had to have things said to her the way they said it in the Dick and Jane schoolbooks when she was a kid. Run, Dick, run. Careful, Bitsy, careful.

Except you weren't supposed to show Sis you resented it. If you did, Sis resented your resenting it.

"You mind your manners when I talk to you," Sis now told her.

"All right, all right," said Bitsy. "From now on, only family folks."

Meaning, naturally, uptight old men like Pa. It couldn't possibly mean getting hitches from cars where there was a family team up front. Nothing on the road went by faster than that kind of a car. Maybe the man at the wheel would like to slow down and lend a hand to a sixteen-year-old Aquarius in tight jeans, but sure as God made little green apples, the lady next to him was not going to buy that package.

Family folks. Like Pa.

She lived up to it too. On trips home from school where she would ask to be dropped off a couple of blocks from the house so Ma wouldn't catch on, and on jumps out of town to kinfolk in Sarasota and Manatee. Truth to tell, although she had no intention of letting Sis in on it, that messy stud in the pickup had scared her a little, what with all the handwork he was trying out on her thigh and meanwhile whooping it down the highway at seventy an hour. And, as if to show that Sis knew what she was talking about, there had been a six-pack on the seat, all of it gone by the time they pulled into Fort Myers. So it really wasn't that much of a drag letting the studs go by and keeping an eye out for something in Pa's class.

She even lived up to it all the way across Florida on the big Thanksgiving trip to Cousin Sheralyn's in South Miami. Big was the word for that trip, because from the way Pa carried on counting out the bus fare, you'd have to believe he was paying for a trip twice around the world. It gave you something to think about all right, how he would carry on if he knew that almost all the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bus fares he had been laying out for quite a while were going, not to the bus company, but for the essentials of life. Records, hair stuff, face stuff, clothes, fast food. Put it all together it didn't really add up to all that much, but it was the difference between life and death. Death came when you ran out of your week's allowance two days after you got it and Sis said no, she wouldn't lend you even a raggedy dollar bill because you were just as knotheaded about money as about everything else.

So, Ma's old valise in hand and all that beautiful bus money tucked away in her shoulder bag, Bitsy made it down to Naples as guest of an exterminator-service salesman, a sad case who talked about termite control the whole trip, and then, by way of that straight, wide-open, hundred-mile run along the Tamiami Trail through the Everglades, she was fetched right into the middle of Miami by a bank-president type driving a gilt-edged Cadillac. Not too bad, except that this one kept the radio tuned to news broadcasts all the way, even when, after a while, it was the same news broadcasts all over again.

Anyhow, news broadcasts or not, there she was in the middle of Miami, which turned out to be a lot bigger city than Fort Myers, so that she had to ask directions a few times and haul that suitcase a lot of distance before she wound up at the bus depot and phoned Cousin Sheralyn to come pick her up. Cousin Sheralyn was seventeen and drove the family car sometimes. She was also the one who, the Thanksgiving before when she had been Bitsy's guest at Fort Myers, had said that once you did the Thomas Edison house and some hunting for shells on Sanibel Island you just about had Fort Myers, and you really had to see Miami to know where the action was, and that was why this whole trip. Now she turned up at the bus depot in the car, and the first thing she said to Bitsy was, "Did you really hitchhike it all the way, like you said you would?"

"Mmm," said Bitsy. She showed Cousin Sheralyn all those five-dollar bills in the shoulder bag. "Supposed to be bus money. Only now it's fun money."

"Man," said Cousin Sheralyn, her eyes opening wide, "you really do have something going, don't you? I wish I had the nerve."

Then she drove Bitsy to her house, keeping the car radio at full volume so that the two of them would not only hear The Sound but feel it, the way it was meant to be felt, and there was Aunt Willa Mae and Uncle Frank and the two older boy cousins, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couple of clowns really, all of them waiting to dig into the turkey and trimmings.

"My," said Aunt Willa Mae, "you get taller every time I see you, Bitsy. I bet you're taller than Sis now."

"Mmm," said Bitsy.

"And how's your ma?"

"All right," said Bitsy.

"And your pa?"

"All right," said Bitsy, and that, all formalities attended to nicely, took care of the old folks.

From then on it was one of those holiday times to remember the rest of your life. Miami was where the action was, no argument about it. Mornings, trying to surfboard off the end of Miami Beach with everybody the right age and all high on sun, salt water, and some grass now and then. Afternoons, a lot of driving around, seeing outside and inside those Gold Coast hotels you'd only see in the movies otherwise, and a lot of souvenir hunting, and along Flagler Street into the record shops, all mixed up with a lot of eating any time you felt like it.

Nighttimes, out to one place after another for the dancing and fooling around and more eating. The fooling around, which Sis had also warned Bitsy about in that Dick and Jane style, turned out to be strictly nothing, since both boy cousins were always nearby and both of them linebacker types. Bitsy agreed with Cousin Sheralyn that it was a drag being supervised like this, but actually she didn't mind it all that much. As far as she could see, it certainly saved her the trouble of making some decisions she'd just as soon not make.

Anyhow, as Aunt Willa Mae said, all good things had to come to an end sometime, so Sunday, right after lunch, Bitsy got her stuff together for Cousin Sheralyn to take her to the bus depot. It turned out that what with all the souvenirs and the new-bought decorated T-shirts and beach hats and the pile of new records, Bitsy found that she needed an extra piece of luggage, whereupon Uncle Frank dug up a good strong carton, and into it went all the extras and around it went a strong piece of cord. So, as if to show what kind of wild weekend it had been, when Bitsy went out to the car where Cousin Sheralyn was waiting to take her to the bus depot she was carrying not only the valise but that carton.

Cousin Sheralyn took a look at the carton. "You got any money left at all?" she asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bitsy opened the shoulder bag and showed her what was left. One dollar and two nickels.

"I thought so," said Cousin Sheralyn. "Well, I'll drop you off Eighth Street downtown. That's the Trail. You can start hitching right there."

"Mmm," said Bitsy.

"But don't you ever let your folks know I didn't put you on that bus. It'll get right back to my folks, and I hate to tell you what would happen to me then."

"A real drag," said Bitsy.

She got off at Eighth Street which didn't look at all like the Tamiami Trail there, just a busy corner full of Latins walking all around and Spanish signs on all the stores, and as soon as Cousin Sheralyn drove off, she arranged the valise and the carton at her feet near the curb, and when a likely-looking car went by, pointed her finger westward. Plenty went by, and for those on the lookout for family-type folks there seemed to be an assortment in almost every car, and none with any idea of stopping.

A couple of one-man cars did pull up and stop, but in both cases this was stud stuff—Latin stud at that—so Bitsy gave them a head-shake, and then, when they persisted in being friendly out of the car window, she just turned her back on them until they took off.

Finally a small truck pulled over, one of those emergency trucks with a hoist in back. The man driving it, strictly family-type except he needed a shave, leaned out and said to Bitsy, "How far?"

"Fort Myers," said Bitsy.

"Nope. Just going back to the shop little past Forty Mile Bend on the Trail. But if it'll help any, hop right in."

So she planted the valise and carton in back of the truck and hopped right in, and that way got as far as a gas station and garage right out in the middle of nowhere, halfway along the Trail. Like every other business along the Trail here, this was on the eastbound side of the road heading back to Miami, so she lugged the valise and the carton across to the westbound side and took up her station there. Trouble was, not much went by, and what did go by looked like it was out to break all speed records. Even the bus she was supposed to have been on went by so fast that it was almost out of sight down the road when she suddenly realized that the sign over its front window had said *Fort Myers* and she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt depressed about that. And, of course, the cars that did pull in at the gas station across the road were mostly heading in the wrong direction.

After a while one of the men from the gas station walked across to her and said, "You figure to stand out here like a sore thumb with a red, white, and blue bandage on it, girlie, you are sure going to buy yourself a lot of trouble in about ten minutes when the police patrol goes by. They are real hardnosed about this kind of hitchhike stuff right now. Had a bad time account of it couple of months ago. And not so far down the road from here, neither."

"I have to get a hitch," Bitsy said.

"All the same, girlie, if you don't want cop trouble, you will hang around for a spell in that ladies room over there. I'll let you know when the patrol goes by."

Maybe it was a put-on, but it didn't seem to be. So Bitsy took the valise and carton with her into the ladies room and hung around there looking through the screened window at the swamp country out in back until the man knocked on the door and said, "Okay now, girlie. They just went by."

So it was back across the road with the valise and carton, and, from the way it looked, nothing to do but stand there and watch the cars whoosh by and feel more and more down about it. Then when she was right near bottom, a car slowed down passing her and came to a stop about fifty feet up ahead. She grabbed up the valise and carton, but the car slowly started off again, and all she could do was stand there feeling like a fool. The car only went about ten feet more though, and stopped again. It was an old black sedan, looked like something out of the museum, but without a dent in it and with a high shine. A weirdo car all right. And with a weirdo driver, too, what with this stop and start business. As if to prove that, he now stuck his jug-eared head out of the window and called back, "You looking for a ride, girl?"

Mister Weirdo himself, because what did he think she was looking for?

She didn't even bother to answer, just headed down the road as fast as she could with the valise and carton banging her legs, hoping he wouldn't change his mind again before she got there. The one good part of it was that she was still playing by the rules Sis had laid down. The car was sure family-style—it looked like the kind of thing you lay away all week and drive only to church—and when she got up to it she could see that the driver might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have been the deacon of the church. A redneck with gray hair chopped short in a real redneck haircut, but still he was all dressed up in a black suit and white shirt and necktie.

But old Mister Weirdo himself all right. Anybody picked you up on the road was likely to have a friendly way about him. This one, when she came up to him out of breath, looked anything but friendly. Then, when she tried to open the back door to shove her things in, she found it was locked. "Hey," she said, but he made no move to open the door, just looked at her through the open window, taking her in.

"Your folks know you travel around like this?" he asked.

"Mmm," Bitsy said.

"What's that mean?"

"It means they know."

"You sure of it?"

"Yes. Anyhow, what's the difference?"

He appeared to think this over, his lips pulled into a thin line, his eyes squinting at her. "That's the truth," he finally said. "It don't make any difference, does it?" He reached over to unlock both doors, and Bitsy got the valise and carton on the back seat, then got into the front seat with him.

He started the car off. "Where you supposed to be headed for?"

"Fort Myers," Bitsy said. "You going all the way there?"

"No."

All right, but at least she was heading in the right direction. She looked over the dashboard to find the radio dial and found there was no radio dial. No radio, believe it or not. She dug into her shoulder bag and came up with the baby transistor. She put it to her ear, tuning it in to get The Sound, and after a while she did. Mister Weirdo didn't seem to mind. He just kept the car moving along at a speed where anything else going their way easily passed them by.

He seemed to be keeping his eyes straight ahead on the road, but Bitsy could tell that every now and then he was giving her a slantwise look, taking her in from top to bottom. It made her realize that there was no bra under her T-shirt with the *Miami Beach* written across it and the palm trees painted on it. On the other hand, there was nothing so special under the shirt—as there would be, say, with Sis—to make him pop his cork. So here you had one of those times where what was almost always a drag could be kind of a comfort.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then she caught him looking square at her. He didn't seem flustered by this. Only came on more squinty-eyed and thin-lipped than ever. "Kind of pretty, ain't you?" he said.

Bitsy shifted over in her seat a little, but she was up against the door as it was. She pressed the transistor hard against her ear to cut out that redneck voice, but it wasn't all that easy.

"I had a daughter about like you," said Mister Weirdo. "Used to travel around the same way, and I never knew about it. So your folks don't really know the way you go hitchhiking, do they?"

"Mmm," said Bitsy.

"What's that mean? You got a mouth, don't you? Why don't you open it up and talk like people?"

Bitsy showed him the transistor. "I'm listening to this," she pointed out. "I can't listen to everything at the same time."

"Then you listen to me!" He suddenly snatched the transistor right out of her hand and jammed it down on the seat. The way he did it, he probably wrecked it. She reached for it and he slapped her hand away. "I said you listen to me. I was telling you about my girl. Same age as you. Just as pretty. Same kind of long blondie hair too."

So it wasn't lollipops they came on with when you got to this age. It was talk about their pretty girl just like you. And with blondie hair just like yours, so next thing there would be that big old hand stroking your hair to show you. And working its way right down your back. And that would just be the start of it. No lollipops for grownup girls. Just that slow, roundabout come-on easing things along to big, big trouble.

But even if you could somehow get clear of the car, what do you do about Ma's valise and that carton?

And for sure this was Mister Weirdo's kind of country they were now traveling through. Empty wherever you looked with not even a gas station or hamburger stand showing up any more. Just a lot of swamp greenery and sickly-looking trees. Bitsy pushed so tight up against the door that the handle of it hurt her side.

He was watching her like a hawk now. "You scared?" he asked.

Bitsy shook her head to show she wasn't.

"Yes, you are." He seemed to like the idea. "And that's all right. That's like it should be when you climb in a car with some man you don't even know. That's what you should have in your head before you start climbing in. Afterward is maybe a little too late, ain't it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bitsy started to answer, but it stuck in her throat. She cleared her throat to get it out. "Nothing to be scared about," she said.

"You mean you don't care what a man can do to you? Kind of free and easy with men, is that it?"

"No," Bitsy said. "Look, you can let me out here. It's all right. I can get a hitch from somebody else."

"You sit right where you are. And no tricks, hear?"

"You let me out."

"Like I already told you, girl, it's too late for that. I didn't pull no gun on you and make you get in here, did I? You did it all on your own."

While he was saying this he was slowing down the car, squinting up the road on the other side like he was looking for something there. Then when the car was really slowed down he grabbed her wrist and held it tight so that for the few seconds when she could have just walked out of that door she had no chance to.

With his other hand he turned the wheel hard and pulled the car right across the road and into a clearing among the trees. Dried twigs cracked under the wheels and the car rocked from side to side on the bumpy ground, but it kept crawling further and further away from the road.

"You let me out!" Bitsy said. "I am scared."

"Maybe not enough yet."

There was a freaked-out answer for you. The worst of it was she had heard about crazies like this. They got some of their kicks from what they did to you. But they got even more from watching you be scared because of it. So here she was, acting up just the way he liked. And not able to keep herself from doing it, either.

The road was well out of sight when he stopped the car among some scraggly trees. He reached across her to shove open the door and then pushed her right through it, still holding her wrist and following almost on top of her. He snatched the shoulder bag loose and tossed it on the seat next to the transistor. "Come on," he said. "I want to show you something."

"There's cops out on that road," Bitsy said. "The gas-station man told me so. They go right up and down all the time. They could be coming right now."

"No," the man said. "They ain't coming now. They only come after it's all over. A couple of months after it's all over. Now look there." He pointed. "Right there."

Bitsy looked. Nothing but a patch of beat-up dead grass. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dragged her toward it, and for all she dug in her heels and tried to hold back it was no use.

"Right here," the man said. He gripped the nape of her neck between his fingers and pushed her head down as if making sure she got a good look. "This is where the cops show up after it's all over. Then you know what they do? They come knock on the door and they say, 'Mister, you remember that little girl of yours that never got back home again couple of months ago? Well, it seems like she was always hitchhiking around, and she finally got picked up by a real bad one. We think we just found what's left of her, so you come along with us and see if it's really her.' "

Those fingers digging into her neck had Bitsy bent almost double now. Her eyes were all filled up so that everything looked watery. "Let go!" she said. "You're hurting me."

He didn't let go. "You ain't hurting," he said. "You don't know what hurting is. Not till a man does what he wants with you until he's tired of it, and then beats you to death. That's when you'll find out, won't you?"

"Yes," Bitsy sobbed.

Now he took his hand from her neck and let her straighten up and wipe her runny nose with the back of her hand. He turned her by the arm so that she faced him. "Girl," he said, "you understand what I'm trying to get into that dumb babyface head of yours?"

"Yes," Bitsy said, her eyes brimming over. "Look, mister, there's that valise in the car and it's a real good valise. And that other box has a lot of good things in it. I swear it has. You can have both of them if you let me go. And the transistor."

He dropped her arm and stood there facing her like that. All of a sudden he looked beat-up and tired. All washed out. "God Almighty," he said, and turned and started walking back to the car. Bitsy watched him go, not believing it. At the car he motioned to her. "Come on. I'll get you far as Naples."

Bitsy still wasn't moving.

"You better come on," said Mister Weirdo. "You stand around there any longer, you are going to have swamp snakes crawling right over your feet."

This time Bitsy did move.

And he did drive her right to the bus depot in Naples, the old car really putting out all the way. Bitsy sat as far from him as she could, tight up against the door again, and after a while she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

got her mirror out of the shoulder bag and did a job on her face, which was a mess. Then she tried out the transistor and found that even with the banging around it had taken it was still working fine.

Too bad in a way, because when she was let out at Naples she'd have to give it up along with the valise and carton. No sense trying to back out of the deal and stirring up old Mister Weirdo again. The smart thing was to let him go drive away with his loot and then tell Ma and Pa it was stolen from her in the Miami bus depot. They'd believe her all right, because why shouldn't they? Better that than ever let them find out about all the hitchhiking.

But right there at the bus depot in Naples, Mister Weirdo showed he was as freaked-out as ever. He pulled up the car and said to Bitsy, "Tell me the truth, girl. You got money on you for that bus ride?"

"No," said Bitsy.

"I figured not."

And then what did he do but get out of the car with her and haul out the valise and carton and go right along with her to the ticket window and buy her a ticket for Fort Myers. So he hadn't let her go because of him settling for the valise and carton and transistor, and that was just about the weirdest part of it. It was really something to think about. Then Bitsy stood there, ticket in one hand, transistor in the other, valise and carton at her feet, and watched him walk out into the street, that redneck haircut of his finally getting lost among the people there, and that was the last she saw of him.

She waited to make sure he was really gone, then went to the door and peeked out to see if the car was gone too, and it was. So she went back to the ticket window and told the girl there she had changed her mind and wanted to get the money back for her ticket, and, no trouble at all, it was taken care of.

So that was that, and she even had some money to show for it.

Getting up to Fort Myers went the way everything should have gone from the start. Bitsy carried her things out to the street some distance from the depot and made it plain she was looking for a hitch until along came this stripped-down job with kind of a nice-looking stud at the wheel, big beard and a big gold earring, tape deck blasting away so you could hear it right across the Gulf, and he got her to Fort Myers in no time. And except for some pushing and pulling she had to do with that wandering hand of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his, with no trouble at all. In fact, he made the run up the coast so fast that she walked into the Fort Myers depot only about an hour after the bus she might have been on checked in.

She phoned the house, hoping it would be Sis, not Ma or Pa, and her luck, it was Sis. Fifteen minutes later Sis showed up at the back end of the depot in her car and helped get Bitsy's stuff into it. By this time Bitsy was really loaded up for Sis. During that fifteen minutes she had wondered if maybe she shouldn't keep it all to herself, but the more she thought of it the more she knew she'd never be able to hold it in. She had too much to settle with Sis.

As soon as they were in the car she said to Sis, "You and your family folks."

"What?" said Sis.

"You know what. You said I should only look to ride with family folks. And that's what I've been doing. And you know what happened on account of it?"

"Suppose you tell me," said Sis, jockeying the car out into the street.

"All right, I will. I got picked up by real family folks on the Trail coming back just now. I mean *real* family folks," Bitsy said, making it slow and loud the way Sis always did. "Like, you know, a shiny old black car and somebody driving it dressed up maybe for a funeral. Real family folks," she said even slower and louder.

"And?" said Sis.

"And first place he could find that was all empty, this nice old man drove off into the swamp there and pulled me out of his nice old car."

"Bitsy!" Sis said. She stepped on the brake, not even noticing they were right in the middle of traffic, cars all going by and honking at them. Then she got her wits halfway together and pulled over to the curb and parked there. "Bitsy, what happened? You tell me straight out what happened, you hear?"

"I *am* telling you. He pulled me out of the car and he showed me where it was going to happen when he was good and ready and he talked wild trying to scare me and he choked me too. Because maybe you don't know about it, but some of those nice old family folks you're so high on are crazies. And this one sure was."

"But what else did he do? Did he—?"

"No," Bitsy said, "he didn't. All of a sudden he just turned off. Just like that. Like he wasn't interested in the whole thing any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more. Then he drove me the rest of the way to Naples, and I got another hitch there."

Sis took a deep breath. "You're lying," she said. "You're making up the whole thing."

"I am not lying," Bitsy said very slowly and loudly.

Sis didn't seem convinced. "You mean some man practically kidnaped you? And got you all alone? And got himself all worked up about it? And then when it came time for the big finish he just turned off? Look, Bitsy—"

"But I told you what he was like, didn't I?" Bitsy said. It almost made up for that whole bad scene in the swamp, because for the first time she could ever remember, she was on the telling end, and Sis, like it or not, was on the listening end. "Don't you see? No matter how much he got himself worked up for a big finish, he couldn't do anything about it because he was just too old. Honest to God, Sis, he was at least as old as Pa!"

"Q"

TITLE NO.	AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	RETAIL PRICE	DIS-COUNTED PRICE
59632	Edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli	THE BLUE DAHLIA	Southern Illinois University Press	$10.00	$ 8.00
54800	Clark, Douglas	PREMEDICATED MURDER	Scribner's	6.95	5.50
78072	Foley, Rae	WHERE HELEN LIES	Dodd, Mead	6.95	5.50
77738	Forbes, Colin	THE STONE LEOPARD	Dutton	7.95	6.35
59649	Foxx, Jack	FREEBOOTY	Bobbs-Merrill	8.95	6.95
58352	Gilbert, Michael	THE NIGHT OF THE TWELFTH	Harper & Row	8.95	6.95
58653	Gilbert, Michael	GIVEN THE AMMUNITION	Harper & Row	8.95	6.95
50050	Lyons, Nan & Ivan	SOMEONE IS KILLING GREAT CHEFS OF EUROPE	Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich	7.95	6.35
77757	MacShane, Frank	THE LIFE OF RAYMOND CHANDLER	Dutton	12.50	10.00
77708	Meyer, Nicholas	WEST END HORROR POSTHUMOUS MEMOIR OF JOHN H. WATSON, M.D.	Dutton	7.95	6.35
77072	Perry, Ritchie	YOUR MONEY AND YOUR WIFE	Houghton, Mifflin	6.95	5.50
78062	Peters, Elizabeth	LEGEND IN GREEN VELVET	Dodd, Mead	7.95	6.35
79283	Steinbrunner, Chris & Penzler, Otto	ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MYSTERY AND DETECTION	McGraw-Hill	19.95	15.75
59667	Weston, Carolyn	ROUSE THE DEMON	Random House	6.95	5.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* detective story by

EDWARD WELLEN

One of the most pleasurable moments in the life of a mystery-magazine editor is that instant when he realizes that unexpectedly he has come upon something new—for example, a type of detective the editor has never encountered before, or a kind of character who has never previously crossed the editor's path, or a background with which the editor is totally unfamiliar. . .Well, Edward Wellen's newest story accomplished that feat with us: it introduced your Editor to a character brand-new to detective fiction—at least, your Editor has never before read about what might be called a professional coinshooter. . .

THE COINSHOOTER

by *EDWARD WELLEN*

Clinton Ledbetter looked out the window of his room to see what his bones had already told him. A raw day, a wet day. He smiled. A good day for going to the beach.

He picked up his metal detector, straightened creakingly, slung the carrying strap of a canvas pouch around his neck and over his shoulder, stuck a candy bar and an apple in his pocket, double locked his door, though it guarded nothing of value except his privacy, and left the roominghouse without running into the landlady. All the omens were good. Luck had to be with him today.

The ocean lay only an easy five minutes' walk away. Its belly rumble and salt breath grew stronger as he got nearer. Yep, luck was still with him: it seemed he and his fellow scavengers, the gulls, had the beach to themselves.

He trod where the wind had writ in sandscript, but treasure trove spoke another language. He switched on his machine, gave it time to warm up, put on the earphones, adjusted the speaker control setting to the threshold level, then passed the search loop over the gravelly sand.

© *1976 by Edward Wellen.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Almost at once he got a loud high-pitched beep. He reminded himself that on a wet or rainy day you were likely to get a much stronger signal than on a dry or sunny day. But his pulse quickened as it always did when he heard that sound. You never knew what you might turn up. It was never-ending on-the-job training.

He dug out of the canvas pouch the screwdriver he had fashioned into a metal probe and thrust it into the sand at the spot that had produced the beep. Six inches down, the tip struck something. He worked the waterlogged sand loose in a coneshaped turn of the screwdriver and scooped it out. The wet metallic gleam he had uncovered belonged to the pulltab from a beer can.

The sea welled up in a pool slowly drowning the pulltab. With care for his fingers he fished it out so he would not waste time on it again in another sweep of the beach in the weeks to come. He dropped it into the canvas pouch to get rid of it once he was off the beach and grimaced as he moved on. At this rate the detector would hardly pay for itself many times over, the way the salesman had pitched it to him.

But his spirits picked up as he unearthed—or unsanded—a brass button, a penny, two keys, a pair of metal-framed eyeglasses, a spoon, and a class ring, all in the space of a quarter of an hour. The feeling returned that luck was with him today.

He had a hunch. Folks seemed more likely to lose things where they sat or stretched out to sun or buried themselves in sand. They seemed less likely to lose things in less cozy spots. So he had, from the time one month ago when he had taken up coinshooting, limited himself to the softer surfaces near the water's edge.

So he swung around toward the less promising arena higher on the beach. He made his way slowly toward the really gravelly area below the retaining wall. The sun was making a half-hearted try at breakthrough and from time to time rare glints of sun gold lifted Ledbetter's gaze to the windows of the houses lining the beach behind and above the wall.

But that was the only gold. He struck not even another beer can pulltab. His hunch seemed to be playing him false. He straightened, about to abandon the hunch and swing back. But as he turned he caught sight of a figure watching him from above the wall.

It was too far away to be sure the man was scowling down at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. But the man gave no answering wave of greeting; the figure maintained its folded-arms stance of disapproval.

Ledbetter set his jaw. Instead of turning back he held his course. He pretended to make finds, studying handfuls of emptiness, then storing them in his pouch. He felt foolish, but damned if he'd let the man believe him foolish for exploring this barrenness.

As Ledbetter came closer to the wall the figure spun abruptly and disappeared. Ledbetter dismissed him with a shrug. A second later, as Ledbetter was about to return to the water's edge, a beep stopped him in his sneaker tracks. A real find—an old silverplated cigarette lighter drove the other man further from his mind.

Gritty footsteps brought the man back to Ledbetter's consciousness. The man had reappeared and was descending the stone steps to the beach. He carried a metal detector of his own and the way he headed made it plan that he meant to preempt the very space that Ledbetter had been bent on exploring and that Ledbetter had seemed to prove worth exploring.

The man's machine looked to have a ten-and-one-half-inch search loop. That might seem to outclass Ledbetter's own six-inch loop. But dedicated coinshooters whom Ledbetter had spoken to, before taking the plunge and putting himself in hock for a metal detector of his own, had insisted that a six-inch loop would beat a ten-and-one-half-inch loop at detecting a dime buried even four inches deep.

At the moment, though, the man's presence with the detector concerned Ledbetter more than the virtues or shortcomings of the detector itself. It was the principle of the thing. You just did not jump another coinshooter's claim.

Then Ledbetter went hollow. It could be that he was the one jumping another's claim. Only natural for someone living hard by the beach to believe that part of the beach belonged to him. And the man would have to live nearby to have fetched the detector so fast.

But the man had never been out here coinshooting during the month Ledbetter had been at it, so how could anyone expect Ledbetter to have known the man considered this area his? Anyway, there was plenty of beach. Maybe they could both work it if they drew a line. Best have it out with the man.

Good psychology, though, to put the man on the defensive. Led-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better nodded to himself, then worked himself up, raising his voice in indignation.

"Hey, you!"

The man turned stiffly, inquiringly. "Speaking to me?"

"Don't see nobody else around, do you? You have a nerve horning in."

"Horning in?"

"Mister, I'm the one does the coinshooting around here."

The man was younger than Ledbetter but smaller, and he looked softer. But he stood his ground. "This beach is public property. I have just as much right here as you—whether it's to swim in the water or to coinshoot on the shore."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yes. If it comes to right, I have more than you, because my house adjoins this section of beach. That's it right up there."

Ledbetter stared at the weatherbeaten but solid turn-of-the-century house. He widened his eyes. "That's the Gloster house, ain't it?" He switched his stare to the man. "Your name Gloster?"

The man flinched slightly. "My name's Gloster. Alfred Gloster. Why?"

Ledbetter shook his head. He eyed Gloster with new interest.

Gloster bore up under Ledbetter's gaze. "You don't have to say why. I can see you know about my older brother's death."

"Heard about it and read about it. Somebody broke into the house and shot him. Right?"

"Right." Gloster's glance fell to his detector. "As a matter of fact, this metal detector belonged to my brother. He liked to go coinshooting on this beach. So, in a manner of speaking, you're jumping his claim."

That stumped Ledbetter for the moment, then he found a comeback. "His claim, maybe, but not yours. He was the coinshooter, not you."

It was the man's turn to hunt for a comeback. "Well, I inherited all his goods—including this detector. And I figure the territory goes with it. And now if you'll excuse me."

Ledbetter glared at the man's back, then turned away muttering to himself.

In his month of coinshooting he had dug up the grand sum of $3.21. Now, unless he found another territory of his own, the pickings promised to be even slimmer.

But, for at least the next few minutes, he would not move far

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away from the spoiler; he stubbornly stuck near Gloster because he saw that his presence annoyed the other man. He would leave, but in his own good time. He wouldn't let a pipsqueak like Gloster pride himself on driving away a competitor. Ledbetter kept his weather eye on Gloster as much to make him feel guilty as to see how Gloster was making out with his fancier machine.

Gloster made out fine. Though he seemed self-conscious and nervous under Ledbetter's gaze, he swept a straight swath and struck something almost at once. With a twinge of envy and a twist of scorn Ledbetter watched Gloster scrabble barehanded to dig out his find. Because Gloster wanted to hide his find he put his body between it and Ledbetter; but Ledbetter wanted to see the find, so he moved to circle Gloster.

Gloster got it out before Ledbetter got around, but it did him no good. The man's trouble was that he had not thought to bring along a pouch, and when he thrust his find under his arm inside his coat it slipped and fell to the ground as he straightened up. By the time Gloster could regain it Ledbetter had reached his side and stood looking down at it.

It was a pearl-handled revolver double wrapped in plastic bags.

Time froze.

"The gun that killed your brother." Ledbetter spoke almost without thinking, but he said it flatly.

Gloster's eyes flashed alarm. "Why does it have to be that?"

"Only a hunch." But the hunch was growing into a certainty as Ledbetter took into account Gloster's manner before and after the find. "They never found the weapon, did they? Well, there's a sure way of proving if this is the one. Ballistics test." He shot a shrewd glance at Gloster. "Even if this ain't the death weapon you don't have a license to keep it, so I'm sure you'll want to turn it over to the cops as quick as you can."

Gloster's eyes slid away. "Of course."

Ledbetter nodded. "I'll go with you. Back you up in case they have any questions."

"That's not necessary. No need to trouble yourself." Then Gloster caught up with the word. "Questions? What questions?"

"Like how you knew just where to dig to find it."

Gloster gave a crazy kind of laugh. "Why, the answer's obvious." He waved the metal detector in Ledbetter's face. "This thing told me there was something here."

"Nope. I've been looking at the meter on your machine. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

needle don't wiggle when you move the search loop around."

And before Gloster could pull the machine back out of reach, Ledbetter yanked it from his grasp and opened the battery box. The batteries were dead, foul with the dried ooze of acid. The machine had played no part in locating the gun.

Ledbetter handed the detector back to Gloster and looked around, orienting himself and the hole the gun had been in. Sighting eastward, he saw that the hole lay in line with a string of buoys; sighting southward, he saw that it lay in line with the distant lighthouse and a windbent tree on the bluff.

He smiled at Gloster. "You knew the gun was here all along. Only way you could've known was if you buried it here yourself. You only dug it up now because you were afraid I'd find it. Now, I wonder why you buried it in the first place and why you were so afraid I'd find it."

Gloster stiffened. "I didn't kill my brother with it, if that's what you're thinking."

Ledbetter studied him. "No, I guess if you had used it on him you'd've deep-sixed it, not planted it so careful." He eyed the gun in its cocoon. "I'll bet there are still fingerprints on that pearl handle."

Gloster looked out to sea and spoke as if to the waves. "Yes, that's the reason I saved it. In case they tried to say I did it. My brother's fingerprints are on the handle."

Ledbetter sucked air. "He took his own life?"

"He was dying of an incurable disease and knew it. Only more pain lay ahead. So he cut his agony short. He didn't tell me he was going to do it. I didn't even know he had secretly got himself a gun. I heard a muffled shot in his room, then found him dead with the gun in his hand. I knew it was for the best, but even so I felt grief.

"Then I thought of myself. Suicide would invalidate his life insurance. I have a bad heart. He was the one who supported us both. I would be left alone with nothing. I'd lose the house, everything. So I took the gun carefully from his hand, wrapped it, and buried it here. Then I made it seem as though someone had broken into the house through a downstairs window. And then I called the police."

Gloster turned and looked into Ledbetter's eyes. "Nobody gets hurt, not even the insurance company. The insurance company only raises the rates."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yeah, everything's going up. I've noticed that." Ledbetter grinned ruefully. "Hard for a guy like me on a small fixed pension to keep up with inflation." He eyed Gloster meaningly.

Gloster cleared his throat. "What—what's your price?" He sounded half hopeful, half fearful.

Ledbetter sought to soothe him. "Oh, I ain't greedy. Just a few hundred will make me forget all about it. And sole rights to this beach."

Gloster only now grew aware that he had torn his fingernails and bloodied his fingers scraping for the gun. He wiped his hands with his handkerchief and drew his wallet. "I have only thirty dollars on me. I'll have to give you a check for the rest."

"That'll be fine. Just make the check out to cash."

Walking away from the lone figure on the beach, Ledbetter shook his head. He felt sorry for the man. Gloster was still in a bind. He didn't dare get rid of the gun, didn't dare hold onto it. Ledbetter looked back once, saying a silent farewell to the man and the beach.

In spite of demanding sole rights to the beach, Ledbetter had no intention of ever returning to it. Fingerprints or no fingerprints, the gun might tempt Gloster to use it on Ledbetter. He would find himself another beach.

He patted his pocket and sauntered homeward ready to confront his landlady. He patted his machine. Yep, it was beginning to pay for itself many times over.

"Q" DETECTIVERSE

SIC TRANSIT JEEVES

by C. McINERNEY

Now that servants no longer abound,
The whodunit may fail to astound—
For when plots need a twist,
Fewer suspects exist
And no butler-who-did-it's around.

© *1976 by C. McInerney.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 448th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . Would you call this short-short "a slice of Americana"?

The author, Joyce Higman, is in her late thirties, the oldest of nine children. She has been married for seventeen years, and has an adopted daughter who is six years old. A former bank bookkeeper, she is now a homemaker and a volunteer librarian in her school district. Her hobbies include "reading everything that doesn't have graphs, playing the piano, swimming, and composing piano music."

She has "been writing since high school"—humorous speeches and articles, skits, and children's stories for her daughter and her daughter's friends. Her writing objective? "To be able to skillfully combine mystery and humor"—one of the most difficult forms in the genre . . .

AN OLD AMERICAN CUSTOM

by JOYCE HIGMAN

I opened the door, and there stood two disheveled men. One of them was the President of the United States.

"Help," he gasped. "They're after us."

The other man pushed the President through the door, then closed it with his foot.

"Lock it, ma'am," he ordered. He had a gun. I locked the door.

The man with the gun made a quick tour of the house, looking into rooms and closets.

The President and I stood in the hall for some awkward moments. Then I remembered my manners.

"Won't you come in and sit down?" I asked.

The other man, having satisfied himself that I was alone in the house, entered the living room just behind us.

© 1976 by Joyce Higman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is Bob Andrews," said the President, as he sat down. "His job is to protect me, so if he seems a bit abrupt, please consider his responsibilities."

"Not to worry," I said. "I understand. May I ask what happened?"

"We were on the plane," said the President, "heading for Kansas City, where I was to address the convention. The pilot got word that there might be an assassination attempt. He made arrangements to land on the far runway, and canceled the reception committee. There was to be a car waiting.

"We got off the plane. I was surrounded by Secret Service agents. Suddenly all the agents but Bob here turned around and ran back into the plane, closing the door behind them. Bob pushed me to the ground. Shots seemed to be coming from every direction. We rolled under the plane and then started running. We ran until we saw your farm, madam, and you know the rest. Now we have to decide what to do next."

"Isn't there someone you could call?" I asked.

"Not until we find out who's behind this," he said. Almost to himself he added, "Assassination. It's an old American custom. But somehow I never thought my own men—"

Bob Andrews interrupted. "Is there somewhere the President can wash up?"

"Of course," I said. "Forgive me for not thinking of it."

I showed the President where everything was, and pointed out the guest room. "In case you'd like to lie down."

"Thank you," he said. "I've been up since dawn. After all that running I could use a rest."

As soon as we heard the water running, Bob jumped up from the sofa, lifted me off my feet, and swung me around.

"You were great, Mom! Just the right amount of uncertainty. You should have been an actress!"

"Do you think I could have lived with your father all those years without being an actress?" I asked. "I've been thinking about him all day. You know how he felt about this sort of thing."

"Dad lived in a different time," said Bob. "People need something like this once in a while in today's world."

"Well, I'm not sure I like being a part of it. That poor man. He must be frightened."

"I really didn't set out to involve you," said Bob. "When we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

started this plan, I just happened to mention that your farm was near the airport. They said it was perfect. Wouldn't take no for an answer."

He went to the window. "No sign of them yet. But then, an army could hide behind that barn."

I put on the coffee pot, and made salad and sandwiches as Bob instructed.

"Not exactly White House fare," I said.

"It's just right. It would look suspicious if you gave him something elaborate. We supposedly just dropped in, after all."

About an hour later the President came into the kitchen, looking rested.

"All quiet," said Bob. "No sign of movement."

"Good," said the President. He sat down, and I served the food.

"What's your regular routine?" Bob asked me in his best Secret Service tone of voice.

"I usually do chores about now."

"Then you'd better do them today, in case anyone's watching."

"Very well." I gave him a furtive wink.

I went outside, into the barn. I knocked three times on the back wall, the prearranged signal. I smiled as I heard the crunch of feet marching toward the door, which I had left unlocked.

I didn't get back to the house in time to see his face when all those shouting people came pouring into the house with their packages, but I didn't miss much. All in all, I'd say it was the cleverest surprise birthday party anyone ever dreamed up.

The President, however, was not impressed. He fired the lot of them, right there in my kitchen.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF SECOND STORIES

Once again it has happened. Before we could publish Joyce Higman's first story, "An Old American Custom," her second story reached us, and once again we have decided to publish a new writer's first and second stories in the same issue, back to back . . .

Although Mrs. Higman's avowed writing objective is to "combine mystery and humor," you will find no humor in her second story. Indeed, we can't help asking you, after you have finished both stories, if you've ever read two stories by the same author that are so absolutely different in every conceivable way. We never fail to be astonished by this miracle, especially with new writers . . . and let us all hope that Mrs. Higman's second story will never become "an old American custom" . . .

THE REPORT CARD

by JOYCE HIGMAN

There were two rules. First, they went when they were summoned. And second, if they came back, they didn't talk about it. The first rule was written. The second was understood.

Failure to report resulted in the disappearance of an entire family. It rarely happened. There was noplace to hide.

The card stated one word, REPORT, with the date and time underneath. Everyone knew where to go. When someone disappeared, people laughed nervously and said, "He got his report card."

In the beginning those who came back were pestered for explanations. They wouldn't talk, and the others finally stopped asking . . .

Lars played the cards automatically. He was getting to be an old hand at solitaire. Eric paced back and forth, incapable of sitting for more than a few moments.

© 1976 by Joyce Higman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lars knew something of Eric's thoughts. He had kept a similar vigil a month earlier, and Virginia had not returned. He had been saddened, but Virginia had been ill, tired, and willing to go.

I do miss her, though, he thought. Their relationship had been a comfortable one.

It would be different for Eric if Helena didn't come back. Eric worshipped Helena, depended on her. He wouldn't take it as stoically as Lars.

They both jumped up when they heard heels click on the stairs. The door to the two-room apartment the four of them had shared was open, and joy crossed Eric's face when Helena appeared in the doorway. She was pale.

"What have they done to you?" Eric shouted, running to her. "I could kill them!"

She pulled away. "Please," she said. "I can't talk about it." She ran to the bedroom and shut the door behind her.

They settled down to routine, the three of them sharing the household duties when they returned from the factory each night. After Eric and Helena retired to the bedroom, Lars would open the sofa bed, plump the pillows, and pick up the picture of his son, David, from the coffee table. It became a nightly ritual.

"Thank God you're out of it," he would say to the handsome likeness of his son.

David was double-exempt from the summons. He was both a superior student and a nonproducer. The latter had dismayed Lars, until he realized that David had told him about it only to ease Lars's mind. David's grades had slipped, just that once, and Lars had panicked.

"Look, Dad," David had said. "It won't happen again. And even if it does—well, I may as well tell you. I've registered as a nonproducer."

Lars regretted some of the things he had said at that time. On consideration he wondered if he would have done the same thing had he been in David's place. Academic standards were high, and one slip . . . Besides, David's roommate seemed a decent enough chap. Who could blame them for hedging their bets? At least they had bets to hedge. As factory workers, he, Eric, and Helena had none. There were always workers.

Lars and Eric got their report cards the same day. Lars's card

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was red, as Helena's had been. Eric's was white. Lars tried to think which color Virginia's had been, but he couldn't remember.

Their appointment was set for nine A.M. one week from the day the card arrived. Eric became despondent.

"The odds are against both of us coming back," he said. "My God, how did we allow this to happen? What kind of people are we?"

"Hungry people," said Lars. "Don't forget this was the first unanimous decision the whole world ever reached."

"Unanimous!" Eric shouted. "Did I get to vote on it? Did you? *Our beloved leaders called it unanimous. You don't see any of them* getting cards, do you?"

"Stand and take it like a man," Lars wanted to say, but Eric had never been courageous. The world had clamored for a solution. It was too late now to decide that the solution was a cruel one.

"You'll come back, both of you. I know it," said Helena. "Then it will be behind us. No one is ever summoned twice." That, at least, was true.

Eric and Helena lay in each other's arms wide-awake, both shaking. It was the last night. Helena had planned to make it beautiful, but it had gone badly. Suddenly she burst into tears. She had to tell him. Maybe it would help if he knew what to expect.

"There were twenty-seven of us," she said. "I counted. Only two of us had red cards. We were sent into one room, the ones with white cards into another. It was all so impersonal! There were two envelopes on a table. A voice over a loudspeaker told each of the two of us to take one and follow the instructions inside. My instructions said I was to watch a set of lights on a monitor. At every third light I was to press a button. The machine would shut off automatically when the job was done.

"Who was the other person with you?" Eric asked. "What did he do?"

"She," said Helena. "She just stood there. I don't know what her instructions were."

"Then what happened?"

"I watched the lights and pressed the button every third light." She began to cry again.

"Don't," Eric said, smoothing her hair. "It isn't your fault."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But I killed twenty-three people!" she sobbed.

"You didn't want—why did you say twenty-three?"

"They let two of them live. I saw them. They came out when we did."

"I wonder why."

"I've thought about it," Helena said. "Remember, they talked about percentages in the beginning? I think it's psychology. They only plan to kill twenty-three, but this way they have some coming back who can say all they did was push buttons, and others who can say they've lived through it. That way people figure there's a chance, and don't cause trouble when they get down there."

"But the ones who come back don't talk about it."

"Because we're ashamed," said Helena. "But they can't count on that. *I'm* talking about it."

Eric was silent for a while. Suddenly he jumped out of bed. "Lars!" he shouted. "Get up! We've got work to do!" Maybe there *was* a chance.

It must be that they were lining people up and marching them in and out of some sort of two-doored execution chamber, with every third person being killed until only two were left. How else could they coordinate the two rooms? If he was right, all they had to do was to figure out which places in line they would have to start in to be the last two, the survivors.

Neither of them was a mathematician, so they each drew 25 lines and crossed them out by threes until only two were left. They each got a different answer. It was hard to keep track of the lines.

They did it again and again. Finally they were sure. The fourth and the fourteenth persons in the line would live. For the first time since the cards came, they dared to hope.

They arrived at the last possible moment, not wishing to mingle with the ones who had no chance at all. They were sent to different rooms, as Helena had said. Lars went to the control room with another man, Eric went with the large group. As unobtrusively as possible, Eric slipped into fourth place when the line was formed on instructions from a loudspeaker.

In the control room Lars picked up one of the envelopes and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

read the card.

Stand by. If for any reason your companion is unable to complete his task you are to read his card and complete the task for him.

Light number one flashed on. Lars snatched the card from the other man. He had to be sure everything went according to plan.

"I'll do it," he said. The other man looked grateful, and said nothing.

There was something familiar about the man in front of him. He turned his head slightly, and Eric gasped.

"David! You can't be here! You're exempt."

David managed a feeble smile. "I made the mistake of slipping under a four-point average and being caught with a girl in the same week," he said. "Don't look so sad. I don't care any more. This isn't living."

The line began to move. The first man was in the receptacle. Eric agonized. It wasn't fair.

The second man was in the receptacle. Eric clenched his teeth. Then, resolutely, he said, "I don't have time to explain, David, but change places with me. You'll be okay, and you'll never have to worry again."

"Move on," came the voice from the loudspeaker as David protested. Eric pushed ahead of David, and entered the receptacle in third place.

The second light came on. Lars read the card. He groaned.

Watch the lights on the panel. Push the button at every FOURTH light. You are being observed. The machine will shut off automatically when the task is completed.

Two people came out, two strangers. Lars's eyes blurred. He went to tell Helena that her husband Eric, his only brother, would not be coming back.

And I'll have to tell David, he thought.

The Director of Humanities smiled. He always enjoyed it when there was someone in the group who thought he could beat the system, someone like that man in fourth place who had made the useless sacrifice at the last moment. Of course some of them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talked when a loved one was summoned. That was the beauty of it!

Breed like rabbits, would they? Well, we offered them birth control. Blame their leaders, would they? Well, we didn't father them. Wanted their leaders to do the dirty work themselves, did they? The red cards took care of that. And he could use any methods he pleased, so long as he fulfilled the yearly quota.

He buzzed his secretary. "Miss Hill, take a note. Next month we'll bring in thirty at a time, count them off by twos, and leave six survivors in each group. See that *Family Planning* gets this information. And send in some coffee."

HOW TO ORDER AT PRE-PUBLICATION LOW PRICE
ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY ANTHOLOGY

Please reserve and mail my advance copy by August 18th. Available on newsstands September 16th.

By sending this order now I do not pay 25¢ shipping and postage and I also save another 25¢ off the regular sale price.

☐ Enclosed is $1.70 each for ____ copy(ies) of EQA #32 Fall/Winter '76 Edition.

My name _____
(please print)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The Newest WHO'S WHO of WHODUNITS!

EQMM 9/76

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* detective story by
THOMAS WALSH

It doesn't seem possible that more than fifteen years have passed since we published a new story by Thomas Walsh. But it's so. The last original by Thomas Walsh to appear in EQMM was "Lady Cop," in our December 1959 issue . . . Well, we're happy to announce that we've brought Mr. Walsh out of retirement to do what he has always done so exceedingly well—write stories about cops who have hearts under their badges—detective stories blending police work with human interest—the kind of stories that made Thomas Walsh one of the most popular writers in the heyday of "Collier's" and the old "Saturday Evening Post" . . . Now meet Neil Danaher and Loretta Travis in an open-and-shut case—the murder of a numbers operator . . .

FALL GUY

by *THOMAS WALSH*

They sent four of them to make the arrest. That was necessary. The apartment had a front door, a rear fire escape, a back yard, and a roof; so while Eddie Waller and Fats Coppola announced themselves via the entry bell, Carl Roberts took over quietly up on the roof, and Neil Danaher down in the back yard. There Danaher checked everything out, made sure there was only the one exit—a passageway that ran back under the house, then up a flight of concrete steps to the street—and after that posted himself back in the shadows at one side of the passageway door.

Not long afterward a window was thrown up somewhere above, and a dark male form hurtled itself down the fire escape from landing to landing, the footsteps banging and clattering like hoofs on a tin road. At the ground-floor landing it hurtled the rail and was up and running in practically the same instant. But at that

© *1976 by Thomas Walsh.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Danaher moved ahead one or two steps to block the exit, his big service revolver out and ready, plainly visible.

"Now, now," Danaher said, with the casually jocular manner that as a rule worked out so well for him. "I wouldn't try fighting the case, Red—or not yet, anyway. Just right where you are."

But he was not obeyed. Red Travis darted in at him like a football tackler, arms outspread, so Danaher had to hit down once with the gun. After that he knelt quickly, patted Red Travis over for a gun, which he did not find, and waited for Carl Roberts to join him. So they had Red Travis up on his feet, both hands properly cuffed at his back, when Waller and Coppola appeared in the passageway.

"Any trouble?" Waller asked.

"Well, I had to hit him," Danaher admitted. "Kept coming at me, Eddie. Wipe off his face."

But now, as Red Travis stood groggily against the wall, blood dripping down over his mouth and chin onto a dirty gray windbreaker, he did not appear threatening at all, but younger and much more ineffectual than Danaher had expected him to be from the armed-and-dangerous headquarters description. He had a thin, delicately shaped boy's face under curly red hair, and his expression was one of pain, shocked fright, and dazed bewilderment.

The four of them marched him upstairs to the street, and when they were putting him into the squad car at the curb, a girl in a brown dress and a stout elderly man ran out of the apartment vestibule and over to them. By that time Red Travis had his head back against the seat cushion, and a lot more blood on his face. When the girl saw that display of apparently deliberate violence, she stopped short, groping for support somewhere, and happened to find Danaher's arm beside her. It was the first physical contact between them, and Danaher could feel her shaking all over.

"Take it easy," Fats Coppola tried soothing her. "It's all right, lady. He just fell in the yard."

"No, he hit me," the boy whimpered, looking around blindly at Danaher. "He hit me, Loretta. I was only trying to—but he hit me. He kept hitting me with his gun, Loretta."

And Loretta was the sister, Danaher remembered. He felt sudden and stupid shame in him, but after all he had been told "armed and dangerous," and did not know how else he could have handled the thing. He tired to get around the sister and into the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

car, thus preventing any words between them, but as he did so the elderly man accompanying her pulled him back angrily.

"You dirty rotten Cossack," the man blurted. "Couldn't wait to start beating up on the kid, could you? You don't even know yet whether he did it or not—but of course you don't have to know, do you? Knock him around. Do whatever you feel like. Kill him. Cripple him. You're not even human!"

The sister did not speak at all, but Danaher could still feel that desperate shiver through her. As soon as she saw all the blood, her breath had caught sharply, but after that she appeared to be frozen. So Danaher had to detach his arm from her, and in the car, wincing from the expression of loathing on her face, averted his own, and kept it averted.

It was altogether useless, he knew, to even attempt an explanation. The boy sitting between him and Carl Roberts also shivered, and began to draw long shuddering breaths. He was still doing that when Coppola got the car into gear and, mission accomplished, turned right at the next corner on the way back to headquarters.

Not long afterward, eighteen-year-old Walter "Red" Travis was indicted on a first-degree murder charge, and it was as clear-cut a case as Neil Danaher had ever handled. At 15 Walter Travis had stolen a car with some friends, gone joyriding in it, and racked it up; but for that first offense he had been placed on probation. At 16 he had been involved in a back-alley gang fight, during which another boy had been stabbed almost to death, though not by Red, and that time, one of the two participants caught afterward, he had been sentenced to a state reformatory.

After his release the sister had got him a job as an assistant bookkeeper for a small clothing firm, but after two months of honest, nine-to-five drudgery, he had begun to keep the accounts for a small-time numbers operator named Morris (Cockeye) McLaughlin.

On the night of October 4th, according to several impartial witnesses, Red had been seen entering McLaughlin's room, 726, in a rackety West Side hotel. He had also been seen leaving in obvious panic a few minutes later, when a floor maid reported that Red had dropped a briefcase in the corridor. The briefcase had burst open and appeared to contain a great deal of money. Further, when McLaughlin's body had been discovered the next morning,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the medical examiner's office estimated that the numbers operator had been dead at least twelve hours, which coincided almost exactly with the time when Travis had been seen entering the room.

So there was motive—in the briefcase money; there was probability—in his previous record; there was opportunity—in his room visit; and there was plain indication of guilt—in his attempted flight.

So it was all open and shut so far as Danaher was concerned—nothing to it. All they needed was the gun that had killed McLaughlin. Only that had not yet been found, despite lengthy and intensive police search, and it was always difficult to get a conviction when the death weapon could not be produced in court.

Consequently, while the trial was coming up, Danaher and Carl Roberts kept plugging away at finding the gun. It was Carl's idea that Red Travis, after doing the job on McLaughlin, had become so frightened that he threw away the gun in or around the hotel itself, and so Carl concentrated on that angle. Danaher, on the other hand, checked out Red Travis' known friends and associates, and then reluctantly, not long after the arrest, returned to the sister's apartment with a search warrant.

That night she answered the door herself and did not appear to recognize him from their one previous meeting. "Yes?" she said, and Danaher had to flash his shield.

Her expression changed then. She moved off quickly as if not to touch or be touched by him, and the same stout man who had been with her the other night got up from the living-room couch. A friend of the family, Danaher suspected, the type that would keep butting in time after time, always pushing himself forward to become a dramatic part of the action.

"So who would you like to beat up on tonight?" the elderly man wanted to know, and in about the tone Danaher had expected from him. "Come back for another shot at Miss Travis or me, have you?"

"Nothing like that," Danaher informed him stolidly. "I was told that he was armed and dangerous, mister. You ever had to wait alone in a back yard for someone like that? If you haven't, then you don't have any idea at all of what you're talking about."

"Yes, such a threat to you," the sister broke in with icy scorn in her voice. "Only eighteen years old, no gun, and about half your size. But it was necessary to hit him like that, wasn't it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Done it before," Danaher admitted with even greater stolidity, "and under the same circumstances would have to do it again, lady. Now I have a search warrant here to look through your brother's room. Where is it?"

Her hair was a softer, brighter red than the brother's. Her eyes were a dark blue. She moved off even farther from him, cold contempt in her attitude.

"Down the hall," she said. "The last door on the left. Would you please show him, Mr. Purcell?"

But the room held only a bed, a closet, a bureau, and a couple of chairs. The closet had three boxes crammed with old clothes and innumerable girlie magazines, a battered baseball mitt, a broken-down camera, and a school picture of fourteen-year-old Walter Travis grinning all over and looking innocent as a cherub. While he was examining the boxes Danaher heard Purcell and the sister murmur together in the living room, and when he got out there again he found that the family friend had taken over for her, in full charge now.

"What we decided," Purcell began, pompously fussing around with his horn-rimmed eyeglasses, "is that there isn't much point snapping at each other like this. We need your help, officer—and maybe we can give you some too. Like to have a cup of coffee with us?"

"No, thanks," Danaher said, knowing that the personal angle was always to be avoided in these matters. It never did any good to talk over the case with the innocent people who happened to be involved. They saw what they wanted to see and explained away all difficulties as they wanted to explain them. Danaher, however, was a professional. He was trained only to see the facts. "I have to report back."

"Which means," the girl said, with a proud but rather shaky smile on her lips, "that it's all settled. You know what happened. You know that Walter did it. Isn't that it?"

"Don't believe one thing or the other," Danaher replied. "We get the facts, lady—and that's all. Then, if they warrant it, we present them to a judge and a jury."

"Yes, of course"—but there was a sudden break in her, an almost desperate reaching out to Danaher with her right hand before she managed to catch and restrain herself. "But what do I know about these things and what can I do about them? Only believe in Walter, and see the facts as they truly are. Suppose all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that money he dropped in the briefcase was the money he'd picked up for Mr. McLaughlin that night, just as he told you? Suppose he walked into that room and found the man already dead, exactly as he insisted he did? Why wouldn't he panic? Why wouldn't he keep hold of the briefcase without even realizing it? And knowing the record he already had and what you'd believe of him, why wouldn't he run out of the room without even a thought of reporting the—the murder to you?"

"Right," Purcell said, once more taking over. "We know who did it. We've been talking it over ever since you arrested the boy, Danaher. And it wasn't Walter."

Danaher could have brushed him off easily enough. It was different with the girl, however. Now, forcing a smile for him, she was twisting her hands over and under each other, and he caught something weary and desperate beyond words in the blue eyes he did not care to look at too closely. It made him stupid enough to hesitate another moment at the hall door. "So all right," he told Purcell. "Then who did it?"

And at once it began pouring out of the two of them, as he had known it would—everything squeezed and chopped to defend the boy, and not one shred of solid evidence behind it all. They did not understand that Danaher had heard the same kind of story so often before.

It was again the evil genius behind the innocent—a certain Carlo someone-or-other. It was Carlo, Danaher heard, who had stolen the car that night and induced innocent Walter to go on the ride with him afterward. Similarly, in the fight incident, it was Carlo who had started the trouble for which innocent Walter had been arrested. And most important of all, it was Carlo who had worked for McLaughlin only a few months ago and who had turned over his job to Walter. Always Carlo, Carlo, Carlo—and never once Walter, Walter, Walter.

Yet Danaher had to stand and listen once he had permitted them to start, and even nod solemnly two or three times as if to indicate a certain amount of belief. It was the sister's doing, probably. Danaher had never had much time for girls, but it seemed to him that he had never met a nicer or more attractive one in his life. There was something about her—something honest, Danaher realized uncomfortably, something sincere, something that must have believed a hundred percent in every word she said to him.

How Carlo, for instance, as an ex-employee, must have known

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the location of McLaughlin's hotel room. How, for the same reason, Carlo must have known that Friday night was the biggest collection night of the week. How Carlo must also have known that Walter was due there at eight o'clock to do the accounts, and how, therefore, Carlo must have timed it to get there a few minutes earlier, shoot McLaughlin, steal the money, and then leave innocent Walter to come along and lose his head when he found what was waiting for him. She did not understand that the one necessary thing was not to set up a plausible theory involving another suspect but to supply Danaher with cold facts, with solid evidence.

"Carlo who?" he could only ask patiently at the end. "What's his last name, Purcell? What's his address? Where can I find him?"

"But that's just the point," she interrupted anxiously. "He's dropped out of sight, Mr. Danaher—and why should he, if he isn't guilty?"

Danaher was still patient. The dark blue eyes were not looking at him now as they had that first night when he had been in the car with Walter. There was a certain urgency of hope in them. There was even an appeal, an unmistakably trusting appeal, to Neil Danaher. He turned his hat over in his hands, looking at it.

"Carlo who?" he asked her.

And she could not answer that. She could only make a helpless motion of her head.

"I don't know. Carlo, that's all I know. It's the only name Walter ever called him. But he did it, I know he did it. It wasn't Walter!"

No, Danaher had to reflect grimly, not Walter. Not possibly, from her personal and emotional angle. But from his—

"But look," Purcell said, bustling forward. "I'll go with you right now to look for him. Right tonight. We know him, see? We could spot him right off for you. What do you say?"

And Danaher, with the blue eyes fixed on him as they were, found himself forced to accede. Until three in the morning he and Purcell and the girl scouted the entire neighborhood—street corners, ratty social clubs, dingy poolrooms, dingier bars. No Carlo.

But even that was not the end of it. Twice that week the sister called him to find out what progress had been made, and she called again about 4:30 the next Friday afternoon. Surely they would find Carlo tonight, she said. She knew they would! Would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Danaher go out with them once again, over the weekend?

And Mr. Danaher, fool that he knew he was, did. But still no Carlo. And no one, not anywhere, who could say where to find him. Friday night, Saturday night, and even Sunday night—and Sunday night she insisted on serving him dinner first. A very nice dinner too—lamb chops with all the trimmings—but of course Danaher told himself grimly that he knew what the dinner was, nothing more than a bone for the dog. Yet he enjoyed it a lot.

There was something about her. She was quick, graceful, and considerate in everything she did. Her red hair glinted brighter than ever under the bridge lamp between them, and when she laughed, as Danaher finally induced her to do by relating a few of his humorous experiences in the department, it turned out to be a laugh that he liked very much.

It was not at all the kind of glum, lonely meal that Danaher usually prepared for himself in his place. This time there was company for him, and exceedingly pleasant company. Once or twice, while passing things, they touched fingers, and afterward in the car, when fussy old Charlie Purcell had joined them, every time Danaher put on his brakes or turned a corner, there was the delicate warm pressure of the sister against him.

All that gave Danaher certain ideas, but very stupid ideas. No good, he had to admit to himself. No good at all. There was the brother to think about, and so very little chance of a personal relationship ever coming to pass. How could there be? When the Carlo thing blew up sooner or later, as it had to do, Neil Danaher would be the enemy again, the man primarily responsible for what would happen to innocent Walter. And therefore . . .

Therefore. He was driving along glumly, no hope at all in him, when Charlie Purcell sputtered out from the back seat, "Hey! There he is now!" and at the same moment the girl dug her fingers into Danaher's right wrist. "Over on the corner," Danaher heard breathlessly. "Leaning up against the lamp post, Neil. It's Carlo!"

There was an empty parking space up ahead. Danaher took it. He got out on the driver's side, motioning them to remain where they were, but even without glancing back he could feel her twisting around in the seat to watch him.

Carlo was all in glistening cocoa brown—hat, shirt, tie, suit, shoes. A dark, narrow, and insolently arrogant face, long sideburns, and a thick yellowish look to the facial skin, making it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appear as tough and impenetrable as elephant hide. He had three rings on his fingers, a jeweled bracelet on one wrist, and a cigarette in his mouth, while the expression with which he confronted Danaher was as unblinkingly ominous, as icily indifferent, as that of a primitive Aztec statue. Yeah, Carlo, he admitted. So what? Who wanted to know?

Danaher knew the type—the type that would sell out his best friend for a one-dollar bill and literally cut his best friend's throat for a five. Consequently Danaher did not pick his words. While he was getting them out, Carlo gave one or two grins to himself, and afterward flipped his cigarette butt into the gutter. Yeah, sure, Carlo said. He knew Red Travis, all right, and he understood that he was in some kind of trouble. But what did that have to do with Carlo?

"Well, that's what I hope we're going to find out," Danaher said, carefully removing a fresh cigarette from Carlo's lips and crushing it out on the sidewalk between them. "What I hear is that you haven't been around much lately. So where have you been, Carlo?"

"Oh, man," Carlo said, low, oily, enjoying his womanish voice. "Old Red trying to pin the thing on me now, eh? Thought maybe he would, though. Just the kind."

"What thing?"

Carlo got out another cigarette, fixing Danaher with small and deadly black eyes. Carlo smiled.

"But a good friend of yours," Danaher said, taking the second cigarette and disposing of it. "Or so I hear."

"That way back," Carlo drawled. "Way, way, man. Not any more."

"Oh," Danaher said. "Well. Something changed, eh?"

Without answering, Carlo permitted his black eyes to drift over lazily at Danaher's car.

"That's the sister," he said. "Had my eye on her too, man."

"Carlo," Danaher said in a carefully pronounced but softly dangerous tone, "say anything like that again and you're going to find yourself flat on the sidewalk with half your teeth missing. I asked you a question."

"Yeah, yeah," Carlo said, deliberately getting out another cigarette. "But you ain't very bright asking it, man, not when I might be able to give you a hand on this thing, if I wanted to. Never found old Red's gun, did you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't know," Danaher said casually. "Couldn't say. You know where it is?"

"Well, not for nothing," Carlo drawled. "But old Red trying to put me on the spot, then maybe I'll put him. Give me a break sometime if I get in a jam?"

She was still looking out at them from the car. Danaher could feel it. He also, quite suddenly, felt an unusual tightness around his chest. Because if he found the gun now, through Carlo, and it was Walter's gun, and Neil Danaher was the man who had to turn it in—

"Might be arranged, Carlo. All depends. Where's the gun?"

Carlo widened his grin, then lit the cigarette with no interference this time. Round One to Carlo.

"Try the hotel room?"

"Every inch. Wasn't there, Carlo."

"No?" Carlo said, and Danaher felt the uneasiness deepening in him. Carlo seemed very sure of himself. "Then maybe you just didn't know where to look, man. Old Red, he never had any brains. Like years ago, when he used to grab a box of candy bars out of a store. Know where he'd hide them, so the sister wouldn't find out and raise hell? Always in the same place, that's where. Never changed it once. So maybe he didn't change it this time, either."

"What place?"

"We making the deal?"

"Could be. If you can turn up the gun, Carlo."

"Do my best for you," Carlo again drawled. "Good citizen, hah? But old Red, he always hid things back of the old bathtub they had. You bother to try the one in McLaughlin's room?"

And Danaher did not know. It was Roberts who had handled that end, and at times Roberts was not too thorough if a search meant extra effort. So all Danaher could do was think back hurriedly to room 726 and recall, with an icy constriction around his heart, the old-fashioned bathtub there.

"I will now," he said quietly. "But take a little ride with me, Carlo. You're going to have a couple of questions to answer if we find it there. Could be that you know a little too much."

But Carlo again chuckled easily.

"Night of October fourth," he said, tapping off cigarette ash at Danaher's feet, "I got myself the best damned alibi you ever heard, man. Was in custody, see? Assault rap. Got thirty days in court for it next morning. Check it out any way you want, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that's where I was—in the old pokey. You don't have a thing on me. See what I mean?"

And they did not, as Danaher discovered at the precinct station just a few minutes later. He trotted back down the steps then to where the sister and Charlie Purcell were still waiting in the car.

"What did he say?" she demanded anxiously. "Did he admit anything at all, Neil?"

"I'm not sure." Danaher was evasive. "I'll check it out right now, Loretta. Then we'll know."

But what he felt in him was a numb misery. Two decent people, it came to him, two people who in time might have meant everything to each other, and now not a chance any more, not a chance in God's world. Because if Neil Danaher found the gun and if Neil Danaher had to testify in court where and how he had found it . . .

At the hotel he got out silently, not even looking at her. The house dick went up with him to Room 726. There were new radiators and bathtubs spread all over the corridor. "Renovating the old dump," Danaher heard. "About time, eh? Well, here we are, Neil. But just tiptoe in, will you? There's an old lady sick in here now, and she always has a trained nurse with her, and usually one of her daughters. Wait till I knock."

In Room 726, however, Danaher was not much of a disturbance. He found the gun in about thirty seconds and exactly where Carlo had told him to look. It was wadded up in a couple of sheets of old newspaper, and the newspaper was the most incriminating item of all. It bore, Danaher saw at once, the date of October 4.

He went downstairs, with the gun in his pocket now. He bought some cigarettes at the lobby stand, stalled, then went outside.

"What did you go in there for?" Purcell wanted to know. "What were you after?"

There seemed no point in delaying it. Now, at least, Danaher had Charlie Purcell with them. Perhaps it would be a bit easier that way.

"After the gun," he said. "I found it."

"And it's Walter's gun?"

Danaher still could not look at her. Then, of course, he would have seen the dark blue eyes looking back at him. Only with what expression this time?

"That I don't know," he said quietly. "Ballistics will have to make the decision. I'm going down there with it right after I drop you off."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Neither of them spoke again after that. But at her apartment, after Purcell had left them, Danaher got out and walked after her to the street entrance. "Neil—" she began there, but just Neil, and nothing else. And yet there was something asked and answered between them at that moment, in just the way she looked at Danaher, and the way Danaher looked at her.

"Yeah, I know," Danaher said. "See what you mean, all right. I don't *have* to report finding the gun, do I? Nobody else knows I found it yet, and they don't have to know, do they? I could throw it into a garbage can or drive two blocks and get rid of it in the East River. Who'd ever find out?

"Only I can't do it, that's all. Don't ask me why. I have to respect myself, maybe. The job I have is the only excuse I got for living. I'd do anything in the world for you, Loretta—but not this. Nothing but a damned fool, I guess, because I know how I feel about you. But that's how it is."

And she understood every word of it. She got out her key, looking back at him—but looking back at him for the last time, Danaher knew.

"Then goodbye," she said. "Goodbye, Neil. I'm sorry."

"Yes, I suppose," Danaher said, a crooked smile on his lips. "Goodbye, Loretta. So am I."

So it had to be all over from now on, with always that thing between them. She went on in and for a minute Danaher remained in the entry staring blindly down at the hat in his hands. After that he walked back to the car and was moving around it toward the driver's side when the first bullet hit him.

The second bullet came so close that he seemed to feel a hot, low whiz under his ear, but by the third he managed to duck down under the car and with his good arm yank out his service revolver.

He waited groggily then, until the man who had fired from across the street ran out into the road at him. After that it was no contest. Even with a smashed left shoulder, Danaher was a trained marksman. So the man spun around, trying to balance himself after the agony of a shattered knee, then collapsed into the gutter, dropping his gun. When Danaher hunched over him, he was beginning to cry.

Somebody, when Danaher came to after the hospital surgery, was in the room with him. Somebody had a very gentle and very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shaky hand on his forehead, stroking it. Somebody was whispering.

"Are you all right, Neil? How do you feel?"

"Not bad at all," Danaher announced drowsily, although not making the effort to open his eyes just yet. "But tell me something. How stupid could I get, anyway? How could I miss thinking about him? How could I, for God's sake? He was there with us every second, right on our tails, watching everything we did and suggesting everything he wanted us to do. I'd even bet he was the one who got Walter to run down the fire escape the night we came over to your place. Let Walter get killed, that was the idea. Then he wouldn't have a thing in the world to worry about, only the gun.

"Just look back over it, Loretta. He knew about Walter's job and, I suppose, even asked a few slick questions about it so that he also knew Friday night was the big pay night of the week for McLaughlin. After that all he needed was a fall guy, and with the record your brother had he was the perfect one.

"He had it all timed and figured to the last second, and must have counted on how scared Walter would be after finding McLaughlin dead in the room. The only thing he didn't count on was how scared *he'd* be himself, after killing a man—so scared that someone would come along and catch him with the gun that in a kind of mad panic he stuffed it behind the bathtub.

"But then he finds out that they're renovating the hotel, and realizes that when they replace the bathtub in 726 someone is going to find the gun. So what to do? Probably he called up and tried to rent Room 726 himself, only he couldn't. There's a sick old lady in it now, with a trained nurse, and usually one of her daughters, which makes three people. No dice. But of course *I* can get the gun for him. Why not? All I'd have to do is knock on the door and show my badge.

"Then he hears that Carlo was in the clink on October fourth, and he knows what kind of guy Carlo is. So he forks over a C-note or two, first explaining how Carlo has an absolutely unbreakable alibi for the murder night, then he cons me right up to the ears with that bathtub story. Remember how he even drove around with us, to make sure we hit the right corner where he had Carlo waiting?

"And I fall for it. I get the gun out for him, which is exactly what he wants, and after he knocks me off and gets his gun back,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then he's free as a bug again. Not a thing to worry about. Good old Charlie Purcell—the best friend you ever had, Loretta—or that's how he made it look to both of us."

"Now, Neil—" and this time it was an anxious whisper. "The nurse said I could only talk to you for a minute or two. So hush now. Only why was he so afraid of the gun? What would that prove?"

Danaher reached out for the hand, found it, and held it.

"Because it was registered under his name," he explained. "Because if we'd found it before he did, then we'd have checked up on him too. Let me tell you something. I thought of just throwing it away for you. I almost did, back there. Know why? It's the way I feel about you, Loretta. Only—"

"Only you couldn't," the whisper said. "My poor honest Neil. Just as I couldn't ask you to do it, either—or not in words. I suppose it's the kind of people we are. Stupid us. Only—only it worked out all right, didn't it? Because if you had thrown it away, then we'd never have been able to prove a thing against him. It would have been just what he wanted. But what did you mean by how you feel about me? What way is that, Neil Danaher?"

"Wait a little," Danaher promised, squeezing her hand then. He had been included in something—"the kind of people we are." He rather liked it. "I'll tell you, all right, and you could go out and make book on it. One thing, though. Just one thing, Loretta. Don't let *Officer* Danaher catch you."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2600, Greenwich, Connecticut 06830.

For change of address, please advise 4 to 6 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

A now-it-can-be-told story—how in 1942 a single enemy agent invaded the United States on the most important mission of the war . . .

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

by ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

The U-boat lay low in the water, its decks almost awash, and shrouded by night fog so thick that from the conning tower even the outline of the forward gun was hazy and indistinct. But only fools lingered on the surface so close to danger, and by the time Steiner came up on deck the crew had already got the rubber raft inflated and over the side.

Steiner found himself shivering—and not from the damp. From excitement. Because less than a hundred yards beyond the fog bank lay the enemy coast—Long Island—and no one in the six months that the U.S. had been in the war had got closer. Not yet anyway.

Arrogantly he looked up toward the conning tower where Prien and the captain were stationed and smiled sardonically. Prien was all right—a good party man. But the captain— Still smiling, Steiner saluted them both, knowing it would infuriate the captain but that he would respond punctiliously anyway.

Beside him, one of the sailors said, "All ready."

The "sir" was omitted deliberately, Steiner knew, but he didn't say anything. The two sailors who would row him were already in the raft. Steiner cast one last glance at the occupants of the conning tower, then let himself be lowered into the bobbing boat. As it began to make way, one of the sailors still on deck knelt to pay out the line that would haul it and its crew back through the surf after Steiner had been safely put ashore.

Steiner sat stiffly in the rear of the raft. He was no boatman

© *1976 by Robert Edward Eckels.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and now, as the fog closed in, the confidence he had felt back on deck ebbed fast. He was frightened by the pitching and tossing, and, worse, he knew, showing it.

Then almost before he was aware of what was happening, a wave larger than the rest shot them forward dizzyingly. Steiner opened his mouth to shout, but no sound came. Then suddenly the water was foaming back away from them and somehow, miraculously, they were ashore. In almost blind panic he scrambled out of the boat and up above the wave line.

The two sailors watched him impassively, waiting until he had got control of himself again. One of them tossed him the waterproof bag with his American clothes, then both sailors dragged the boat back into the surf.

Steiner made no move to help them. They could drown for all he cared. The clods. His was the important mission, and only he could accomplish it. The Commandant himself had said as much back at the training camp.

"The reports are uniformly excellent," Reinboldt had said. "Which in a way, of course, is only to be expected since you were well screened before you were selected. But even so, your progress in response to the training has been much faster than any of us anticipated."

"Thank you," Steiner said quietly. He sat at ease across from the Commandant's desk, behavior unthinkable under any other circumstances, but insisted on here as an essential part of his "Americanization."

"As a result," Reinboldt went on as if uninterrupted, "the Fuhrer has decided to move your mission forward. You will leave for the United States next week. Your targets remain unchanged, of course. First Roosevelt, then Marshall." Reinboldt paused to light a cigarette. "I don't have to tell you the consequences of success," he said. "Or of failure."

Steiner smiled faintly. "I won't fail," he said.

"No," Reinboldt said, "you won't." He took an envelope from his desk and passed it across to the other man. "Your cover has been well prepared. These are the documents you will need to start: driver's license, draft registration—deferred status, of course—Social Security number and all the other paraphernalia Americans seem to find indispensable."

Steiner looked at the papers approvingly. All had a slightly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

worn look as if they'd been carried about in a man's wallet for some time, and included among them was a certified copy of a birth certificate indicating he had been born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on October 14, 1918. It was, he reflected, his real birthday.

"Your name," Reinboldt went on, "was chosen with equal care—Frederick William Johnson. Frederick William because it's close to your own and thus, like the birth date, easy to remember. Johnson because it's one of the most common American names but yet not suspect like Smith or Jones. You should practise writing it until your signature flows naturally."

"I will," Steiner said.

"We have also arranged for you to be given $10,000 in various denominations of American currency. Used carefully it should be more than enough. One word of caution, though. For security reasons it was necessary to obtain the bills from sources solely within the Reich and the larger denominations are from a single shipment received by the Berliner Kreditanstalt in 1932. Ten years is a long time, but the serial numbers are consecutive, and it would be less than wise to assume that no record exists by which they could be traced. For safety's sake spend or exchange them in different places and where you are not known or likely to return."

Steiner smiled wryly. "You don't overlook anything, do you?"

Reinboldt didn't return the smile. "The secret of success," he said, "is attention to detail. Remember it. It pays."

It did indeed, Steiner thought, shivering purely from the cold now as he stripped to change from his submariner's uniform to his American clothes. It was a pity, though, that all that careful planning hadn't taken the American climate into account and provided some sort of heating arrangement.

Or perhaps it had been considered. Steiner smiled to himself as he pulled his trousers on. It would be just like Reinboldt to have thought of it and then discarded the idea on the theory that the cold would drive his man to work faster. And in any case Steiner did finish quickly, stuffing the discarded uniform into the bag and then carrying it down to bury it below the wave line where the lapping water would erase the last traces of digging. The small shovel—a child's toy really—he simply discarded several yards farther down the beach where it would appear just another piece of holiday litter.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now all he had to do was head inland away from the water. Here the fog—great gray billows that reduced visibility to a matter of yards at most—was a complicating factor. But he had his compass and even if he did drift slightly off course, sooner or later he was bound to hit the rail line that ran parallel to the coast for miles in both directions. Then it was just a matter of following the tracks to the next town and picking up the first train out in the morning.

All the more then was his surprise when he stumbled onto the dog halfway across the beach.

It was a shepherd dog, not yet fully grown, running free but trailing a leash. It stopped, hackles rising, when it saw Steiner and for a moment man and animal eyed each other warily. Then Steiner began to edge around it, careful to keep the distance constant and his eyes steady on the dog's. The dog continued to bristle but didn't move. Steiner began to breathe easier.

Then he heard the voice calling out of the fog, "Rex! Rex! Where are you, boy?"

The dog hesitated, distracted momentarily by its master's voice; then as Steiner reached too quickly for his gun the dog launched itself straight at him.

Steiner forgot the gun and ducked down instead to grab the leaping animal's extended forepaws and jerk them violently apart.

The dog died instantly. Steiner let it fall, then crouched beside its dead form, his hand tight on the gun again. The voice was more urgent now and coming closer.

"Rex! Rex!"

Go back, you fool, Steiner thought. Go back!

But he came on, first the glow of his light visible through the murk, then the man himself. He was young—in his early twenties—and wearing a blue sailor's uniform but with military leggings and web belting. As far as Steiner could see, though, he wasn't armed, and Steiner rose slowly to face him.

"What's going on here?" the sailor said. His flashlight picked up the dog's limp body. "Rex?" He bent over the dog. "My God, what happened?"

Steiner struck swiftly, smashing the gun into the base of the sailor's skull. The man dropped like a stone. Steiner hit him twice more to make sure, then felt for the carotid pulse. There was none.

Steiner knelt beside the dead sailor. He felt no remorse or re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gret, only annoyance that this might complicate his mission. The bodies were bound to be discovered and that would bring questions about who and why that Steiner didn't want raised. Or maybe not. Maybe he could confuse the issue at least long enough to let him get clear, and that was all he really needed.

The trigger guard on the gun had bent slightly under the force of his blow and there was a smear of blood along the underside of the barrel. Steiner wiped it clean on the sailor's blouse before tucking the gun back under his jacket. Then catching hold of the man's body under the arms he dragged it down into the surf, soaking himself in the process and losing his sense of direction so that he wasted ten precious minutes searching for the dog.

But luck was still with him, and finally he found it. The dog wasn't a heavy animal and there was no blood. He picked it up in his arms and carried it into the woods beyond the beach, hiding the animal's body under a pile of rotting underbrush. The leash and collar he took with him to throw into a field on the other side of the railroad tracks.

By then his clothes had begun to dry and he felt more himself again. It helped too when he found a town sooner than he had expected. The train station was closed for the night, but there was a convenient patch of woods across from it. Steiner found himself a spot near the middle where he was sure he couldn't be seen, put his back up against a tree, and closed his eyes . . .

He awoke to find it full light, the sun already high enough to have burned off the last traces of the night's fog. That confused him, because even exhausted as he'd been, the noise and clatter of trains arriving and leaving should have awakened him. Even more confusing, though, was the station itself. It should have been crowded with commuters headed for the city, but in fact it looked as deserted now as it had the night before.

Steiner watched the station quietly for several more minutes, then got up cautiously and went over to investigate. It was deserted. The door was locked and the ticket window shuttered, but there tacked up on the wall beside it was the schedule: 5:18, 5:45, 6:14, 6:40, and so on up to 8:13, then every hour thereafter.

Steiner looked down at his watch: 8:05. And that was the right local time—he'd set it himself on the U-boat from a New York radio station they had monitored. But 8:05 became 8:30 and then 8:35 and still no train appeared. Steiner began to sweat. What

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had gone wrong? A breakdown on the line? Or something worse? Something that had to do with a body on the beach—and with him?

He was still trying to make up his mind when he heard someone approaching up the path from the town, whistling as he came. Steiner hesitated, then stepped back carefully against the wall in case the whistling wasn't as innocent as it sounded.

Moments later a tall thin-shouldered man with a bony young-old face came around the corner of the building. The man stopped whistling when he saw Steiner but otherwise went on about his business, pulling out a large key and unlocking the door.

Steiner tried to follow him in, but the man shook his head. "Station's closed. Buy your ticket on the train."

It hadn't been covered in his training, but Steiner reacted the way he thought an American would. "What the hell happened to the 8:13?" he demanded.

The stationmaster looked at him impassively, then tapped the tacked-up schedule. "Memorial Day, mister," he said. "Same schedule as Sundays." He went on inside, closing the door after him.

Steiner almost laughed with relief. There was nothing wrong after all. It was just a holiday. It would be a good joke to share with Reinboldt when it was all over—assuming Reinboldt was ever in a joking mood. In any case, his good humor restored, he turned back to the schedule, this time noting the smaller one at the bottom, the one for Sundays and holidays.

The train was at 10:23—less than two hours. Too long just to hang around the station, though, and to kill the time he strolled casually down into the town itself.

It was a pleasant little place, especially in the quiet of a holiday morning, and Steiner decided he might like to come back sometime—on vacation after the war perhaps—when he would have the leisure to really enjoy it. Now, however, he was content to stroll about, until the sight of an open restaurant reminded him he hadn't eaten since the day before. Suddenly ravenously hungry, he went in.

It wasn't crowded and he had no difficulty picking a booth near the rear where he could watch the entrance without being seen himself. The varied bill of fare astounded him, and he ordered heavily: hot cakes, eggs, sausages, and coffee—real coffee. It was almost as if there were no war. They'd learn differently quickly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enough, but for the moment, Steiner reflected, the plentiful food was there to enjoy, and he ate with gusto, remembering, at the last minute to cut with his right hand and then transfer the fork to eat. That, strangely enough, pleased him more than anything else.

The good feeling died quickly, though, when a policeman came in and headed toward him. He was a big man in his mid-fifties with a lined weatherbeaten face and a heavy gun worn butt forward on his right hip. Automatically Steiner's own hand slid under the table to close over the gun beneath his jacket. But then the other man pulled out a chair and sat down at a table across the aisle, refusing the menu the waitress proffered.

"Just coffee, Sal."

Steiner took his hand off his gun.

"I guess that was some excitement down at the beach this morning," the waitress said.

The policeman looked up at her wryly. "Well, now, word sure does get around fast, doesn't it?" he said.

The waitress shrugged. "Well, you know," she said, "small town and all that. One of the Coast Guard boys, wasn't it?"

Steiner stiffened. So the tide hadn't taken the body out after all. He cursed himself for a fool for having wasted the night. If he'd kept on, even hiking, he'd have been well clear by now instead of sitting here possibly trapped and, being obviously a stranger, suspect.

"Got himself killed, didn't he?" the waitress said.

"Something like that," the policeman said. "You can read all about it in the paper tonight. Now, how about that coffee?"

"Sure," the waitress said. She wasn't the least offended and poured the coffee nonchalantly. "While I think about it, Charley's looking for you. He picked up some Indianheads he wants you to look at."

"I'll stop by on my way out," the policeman said. He picked up his cup, then, leaning back in his chair, looked around casually, stopping as his eye caught Steiner's. "New around here, aren't you?" he said.

Steiner's hand started to slide back toward the gun.

"Come up for the fishing?" the policeman said.

Steiner's hand stopped. "Yes," he said, picking up the cue easily. "Yes, of course."

The policeman nodded slowly. "Seems half of New York comes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out these days," he said. "Don't know where they get the gas. Still, you've got a nice day for it."

"Yes," Steiner said. "A very nice day." He turned back to his food. Half of New York! An exaggeration, of course. But still it meant a crowd of strangers among whom he could safely lose himself.

Deliberately he finished the last of his breakfast, then signaled the waitress for his check. The policeman, Steiner noted with satisfaction, had lost all interest in him—had in fact taken his coffee forward and was chatting earnestly with the cashier, presumably about those Indianheads.

American fashion, the waitress left his check face down on the table. It came to $1.70, and feeling generous Steiner tossed two of Reinboldt's one-dollar bills on the table to cover the amount plus tip, then sauntered out.

He was halfway down the street when he heard someone calling after him.

"You! Hey, you!"

He paused and looked back. The policeman had followed him out and was striding toward him now, holding something in his hand.

Fear rose like a hot flood in Steiner's throat. Because even at this distance he could recognize what it was—the two bills he'd left. Without really thinking what he was doing he began to run.

He heard the shout behind him, full of surprise, then the pounding footsteps, and ran faster. Then as suddenly as he had begun he stopped and swung around, pulling the gun out smoothly and dropping down onto one knee to steady his aim.

Caught off guard, the policeman threw himself desperately to one side, clawing—much too late—for his own gun. Steiner tracked him expertly. His finger tightened on the trigger.

It moved a fraction of an inch, then jammed, and the last thing Steiner remembered before the policeman's bullet smashed all thought in him forever was the bent trigger guard and Reinboldt saying, "Attention to detail . . ."

"Who was he actually?" the reporter said.

"No way to tell for sure," the policeman said. It was much later, and they sat together over coffee in that same small restaurant. "The address on his driver's license was a phony, and none of his other papers checked out either. The Coast Guard thinks he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might have come in off a U-boat because of that murdered beach-pounder, but there's no way to prove it."

The policeman's weatherbeaten face looked even more leathery than usual. "Funny thing, though, all I really wanted to do was ask him about the money. Money's my hobby, you know."

"Mine too," the reporter said, grinning.

"No, I mean seriously. Old coins, old bills—that sort of thing. And here was somebody paying a restaurant check with two practically mint-condition greenbacks. Of course," he added ruefully, "anybody would have spotted it. Hell, those old big bills have been out of circulation for close to eight or nine years now—ever since Roosevelt took us off the Gold Standard in '33."

CURRENT MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE HARDCOVERS

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER	PRICE	ON SALE
Aird, Catherine	*SLIGHT MOURNING*	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	$5.95	8/20
Fraser, James	WHO STEALS MY NAME. . .	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	$5.95	8/20
Gilbert, Michael	THE NIGHT OF THE TWELFTH	Harper & Row	$8.95	8/4
Gores, Joe and Pronzini, Bill (editors)	TRICKS AND TREATS	Doubleday & Co., Inc.	$5.95	8/27

Titles and Data Supplied by the Publishers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* crime story by
JERROLD PHAON

On rare occasions we offer you a horror story, a "thriller"—as a change of reading pace and as a means of heightening, by sheer contrast, the suspense in the less shivery stories. If, however, horror and a shuddery denouement are not your dish of tea this month, skip the next eight pages—and skip a climax you are not likely to forget for a long time.

Perhaps you will be tempted if we quote from one reader-report on this story: "The author has set an almost mythological tone . . . the mood and atmosphere are chilling" . . .

THE OUTSIDER

by *JERROLD PHAON*

He lived in the woods, in a gray weathered shack nestled into the side of a tree-covered hill. He had lived alone there for so many years that he had nearly forgotten how or why or when he had come, although something deep and primitive within him, an elemental instinct, reminded him at odd moments that he had once done something awful, that his life had been touched by evil.

He had come to feel safe here, in his forest, joining each solitary day to the next with the simple tedious routines of his life that had become, over the years, a series of rituals. His day began with the bath ritual, when he went each morning to the stream and lay down on the pebbly bottom and let the water swirl around him, and he sensed that the ritual had something to do with cleansing his soul as well as his body.

He also had a ritual for working in his garden, which he kept in an open clearing at the top of a rise where the plants could get the sun. He loved the feel of the earth crumbling between his fingers, loved the smell, the taste.

© *1976 by Jerrold Phaon.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There were rituals for nearly everything—for checking and setting his traps, for cleaning and preparing the animals he caught, for gathering berries, catching fish, cutting wood. But the most important one was the fire ritual, of laying the wood just so on the hearth and igniting the tinder so that the fire spread evenly. This occurred after darkness had settled, when he ate his only cooked meal of the day, before bedding down for the night.

It was a hard life, but he had grown used to it, had found a measure of happiness. He took pride in his shack. It was solid enough, built on a foundation of fieldstone. The roof was slanted in to join the hillside. When he had first discovered it, he noticed places where boards had been replaced on the outside walls. Inside, the wooden floor was still firm. Brown leaves gathered in musty piles in the corners and had the wet organic smell of decay. Along the back wall there were a narrow hearth and a mud-and-stone chimney.

The cabin consisted of just the one room, with a few pieces of homemade furniture and a low rail bunk with a straw pallet on it. Piled near the hearth was a small stack of evenly cut firewood. The place was utterly deserted, and yet, somehow, it seemed that some faint trace of habitation still lingered. Perhaps it was the stack of firewood, cut and ready to be used, or perhaps it was the solidity of the building itself, the new boards and the unbroken windowpanes. But it was obvious that no one had lived here for years. He settled in and in time the place became his own.

No one bothered with him. There was a village nearby, a tiny place that consisted of a cluster of durable, weathered frame houses built around a network of self-sustaining gardens. The village had a name, but the place was not listed on any road map, and the only route in or out was along a narrow neglected lane of packed clay that cut through the trees at the crest of the last range and then wound down along the ridge to the village.

The only contact the villagers maintained with the outside world was with a supply truck that came in twice a year, usually in early summer and mid-fall, when the road wasn't mired in mud or impassible because of snow. The community centered itself around the General Store where trade was conducted under a complicated, primitive system of bartering. His only contact with the villagers occurred when he made one of his infrequent trips to the General Store to trade pelts for the few supplies he needed to balance the austere living he made off the land.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The villagers themselves were a strange and primitive people, held together by a sense of solidity, of oneness, borne of too many years of family in-breeding. He could feel their eyes on him whenever he entered the village, could sense their suspicion of him, but they never bothered him or spoke to him.

Except for the girl. He had seen her walking through the woods several times, and he had begun stalking her, watching her from a distance. She was young and possessed a raw beauty that made him want to observe her the way he observed the other animals of his forest. For it was precisely this animal quality about her that intrigued him, caused his instincts to sense her presence before his eyes could detect her movements among the saplings and thick brush.

Something told him she was there because of him, but he never approached her or tried to speak to her because this would make her human, would remove from her the animal quality he had come to admire.

Then one day she came upon him quite suddenly. He was out in the middle of the stream scratching along the bottom for some freshwater mussels. He straightened as soon as he felt her presence, and when he turned he could see her sitting on the bank, watching him. Her mouth was parted in a sly, provocative grin.

Then, when she knew he was looking directly at her, the expression changed, was no longer sly or provocative. It became the same kind of grin he'd seen on forest animals he'd found in his traps, an expression that somehow conveyed the tremendous depths of knowledge and agony. He waded toward her until he was knee-deep in the water next to the bank.

She stared at him, the expression on her face changing again, the eyes going glassy, empty. He tossed his crude wooden rake onto the bank and hefted the sack of mussels out of the water.

Then the girl said, "What's your name?" as though she were accusing him of something hideous.

Without answering, he hauled himself out of the water and headed along the creek path to his cabin. He could hear the girl behind him, following. At the cabin he glanced back. She was moving toward him through the high yellow grass on the slope. He emptied the sack of mussels onto the ground, then knelt and began sorting them into three skin bags according to size.

"They talk about you in the village," the girl said behind him. "They say you're evil."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He stopped sorting the mussels and turned to look at her. The sun was behind her, just above the crown of trees, and he had to squint. In the strange light she looked suddenly old and withered, with eyes that seemed to shine with their own inner light.

"They don't come around here because they're scared," she said. "The other one—the one that lived here before you—they say he killed someone."

He turned away and went back to sorting his mussels. After a while he lost himself in the ritual, and by the time he'd finished with his work the girl was gone.

The sun had dropped down behind the trees and threw only a soft silvery light over the rim of mountain. The wind grew cool. He gathered up his catch and took it inside, hanging the sacks from nails driven into the ceiling rafters. Then he placed his firewood on the hearth, stacking the pieces into a nearly perfect pyre.

The fire warmed him, made him drowsy. He thought about the girl then, about what she'd said, and then dismissed it. It wasn't part of his routine, wasn't one of the rituals. He cut some meat and cooked it on a spit over the fire, then ate with his fingers. When he finished his meal, he washed his hands carefully in a little wooden bowl and sprinkled the excess water that was on his hands around the cabin. Then he lay down on his pallet and watched the fire. Soon he was asleep.

Just before dawn some men from the village kicked in the door of the cabin and yanked him out of bed. He was still stupid with sleep, too dazed to struggle. He was pushed face down on the floor, his hands behind his back. He could feel coarse rope biting into the flesh of his wrists.

"You're under arrest," a man said. Then: "Albert, shine that damn light over here."

So it has finally happened, he thought. Even out here, even with the rituals, they had still found him. The weight on his back eased and he brought himself to his knees. Someone with a flashlight was standing in front of him. The harsh light hurt his eyes. He jerked his head away from it.

"Albert, take that damn light out of his eyes," the first man said. "Albert ain't too bright, but he does what he's told. Say hello, Albert."

"Hullo," Albert said dully.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm constable hereabouts," the man said. He pulled a chair over by the bed and straddled it. "I want to ask you a few questions."

He nodded, then looked past the constable. Albert was playing with the flashlight, holding it under his chin, the light casting his wide flat face in shadows so that it seemed separated from the rest of his body, suspended in the darkness.

"First off, who are you, mister?"

The constable waited for an answer, but none came. "What are you doing here? Where are you from?"

Again, no answer. The constable sighed wearily. He directed his anger at Albert. "Stop playing with that damn light!" The constable took a deep breath and continued, "Do you know a girl by the name of Sadie Stillman?"

He shook his head. No. He had never wanted to know her name. It hadn't been important.

"That don't seem likely," the constable said. "She was seen coming into these woods. Just yesterday her ma gave her warning about coming out here. Seems she didn't listen. We found her body on the creek path not far from here. Somebody choked the life right out of her."

He didn't answer. Behind the constable, Albert said, "Sadie dead." The beam of light slid down the wall to the floor. "Poor Sadie."

"Albert's the one found Sadie," the constable said. "He sort of liked her." He paused and coughed, then got off the chair and gently took the flashlight away from Albert. He said softly, "Don't look good for you, mister. We're a close community around here, and you're an outsider. Everybody liked Sadie."

"Poor Sadie," Albert echoed.

The constable went to the window and looked out. The gray predawn light was starting to wash over the treetops. "As soon as it's light enough we'll take you in for the trial."

It seemed as if the entire village had turned out when they emerged from the woods and came down the path toward the General Store. It was a quiet, warm morning and most of the men were wearing bib overalls without shirts. The women wore long dresses; their faces were masks shielded from the sunlight by wide-billed bonnets.

When the villagers saw him approach between Albert and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

constable, their dull muted murmurings rose one breath in volume and then ceased altogether. They stared silently with the grim weathered faces of mountainfolk. The ring of people parted for him and he was led up onto the railed porch at the front of the General Store. The constable stood beside him, Albert behind his back. They faced the silent crowd.

In his harsh twangy drawl the constable told them about the details of the arrest, about the mysterious background of the outsider. He reviewed the details of Sadie's life and death in the village and went over the facts that pointed to her murderer.

He listened quietly with his head bowed and stared at the rough planks under his feet. An insect crawled out of one of the cracks and he squashed it with his foot, easing all his weight onto one boot, slowly, until he heard the brittle outer shell snap. Knowing it was pointless, knowing that whatever justice they meted out to him had been a long time in coming, he refused to say anything in his own defense. Finally the constable asked them for a verdict.

"Guilty!" someone down below said.

Then another followed, "Guilty!"

"Guilty!" a woman cackled.

"Guilty!" "Guilty!" "Guilty!"

"So be it," the constable said. He lowered his head until the crowd quieted. Then he looked out at them again. "We got our own ways around here," he said. "But we also got a sense of what is just, as it was handed down to us by our fathers and their fathers before them. We got to do things the way we was taught."

The constable paused a moment before going on, then his resolve strengthened. "We ain't had nothing like this in a long time. Most everybody remembers the last time, and I reckon most everybody remembers how we handled it. This time ain't no different."

The constable led him off the porch and through the crowd, which parted silently to let them pass. They went down the street, up another porch, into a dark flowered parlor. An old woman came out to meet them and directed them to the back of the house, where an old man with a mustache and wire-rim glasses was waiting. They untied his hands and made him lie down on a long examination table. The last thing he remembered was the old man leaning over him, smothering his screams with an ether mask. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He sank low to another world, where there were no dreams, only starbursts exploding across a black curtain stretched tight across his mindless brain. When he awoke, feeling nauseated and thirsty, he discovered he was in a pitch-black room in a bed that seemed to balance precariously at the top of a slender tower. Later he felt the pain, the constriction of bandages around his body, and realized he was unable to move. Then he screamed, screamed so loud he felt the blood pound to his head, until a door opened in the wall of darkness and a slit of light fell across his bed. The old woman craned her head into the light, then stepped back and shut the door. After a while he stopped screaming and lay there whimpering. God, no! he thought. Not that!

They'd cut off his arms.

He spent his time staring at the patterns of the cracks in the ceiling. One afternoon the constable came into the room and stood at the foot of the bed. The constable coughed nervously and twirled his hat in his hands.

"We'll take care of you now," the constable said softly. "It's only just." He said nothing in return and the constable coughed again and looked away, embarrassed. "We got our own ways around here," he said, his tone shrill, full of anguish. "We gave you justice!"

When his shoulders healed, they took him back to his cabin. They placed food on the table, built a fire on the hearth, and stacked wood against the wall. The next morning Albert came alone with another bundle of wood and a basket of food.

This became the new ritual of his life—a ritual of waiting for Albert to come twice a day, in the morning and again in the evening, to bring his food and build his fire. He learned to eat like an animal, sticking his face into the food, nudging things with his nose, licking crumbs from the table and floor.

When winter came, he built a nest of blankets on the floor close to the hearth and crowded near the fire. He discovered his ears could pick up the tiny sounds from outside—the movements of forest animals along the creek path, even a change in the direction of the wind. His hair grew long and shaggy; a thick beard matted his face.

Albert continued to come twice a day, but he'd learned to go out of the cabin while Albert was there. On several occasions Albert

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had struck him, had sent him whimpering into a corner, when he'd rushed to the basket of food too eagerly. His instincts, which had become increasingly keen, warned him when Albert was coming, and he waited in the forest, hidden in a line of brush near the cabin, while Albert cut his wood and built his fire.

Then Albert stopped coming. It was mid-winter and there had been a severe blizzard. After two days his food ran out; there was no fire. He paced constantly around the little room to keep warm. For nourishment he began to stick his head outside the cabin door and eat snow, each time relatching the door with his teeth.

After ten days, when the storm finally lifted, the constable came to the cabin. It was night and he was hunched in his nest of blankets near the hearth. He was crazed with starvation, and when he heard the constable enter he stirred and lifted his eyes. The beam of a flashlight fell on him and he flinched.

"Oh, God!" the constable whispered. "I brought you some food," he said and put a basket on the table. "And something else." He went back outside and returned with a box. He placed that too on the table. "Listen here," the constable said. "I come to tell you we made a mistake."

He wasn't listening. He moved out of the shadows, toward the table. His mouth was watering.

"I know there isn't anything can be done about your arms," the constable said. "But maybe this will help make up for it."

He lowered his face to the box and sniffed.

"Albert was the one that killed Sadie," the constable said. "We caught him trying to do the same thing to another girl." He came forward to touch the lid of the box, but stopped when he heard the low fierce growl. "Oh, God!" the constable moaned. He backed toward the door and left quickly.

It didn't take long to nudge the lid off the box. His lips curled down over his teeth. The smell of blood from the two freshly severed arms rose up to his nostrils.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another master parody-pastiche by Jon L. Breen, this one inspired undoubtedly by the Ellery Queen TV series on NBC, starring Jim Hutton as a young Ellery and David Wayne as his father, Inspector Richard Queen, and Tom Reese as Sergeant Velie . . .

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DISORIENTED DETECTIVE

by JON L. BREEN

"Healy," said Inspector Richard Cune, "I'm worried about E. Larry. You and I never seem to change, but E. Larry is not the man he was."

A worried frown crossed Sergeant Healy's beefy face. "What's the matter with the Maestro, Chief? He seemed fine the last time I saw him, during that Swedish boot business."

"Yeah, but just lately he's been acting really funny. Forgetful for one thing—never on time for dinner, misses appointments. Also, he's always falling over things—I told him he should get his eyes examined, it might be astigmatism, but he says, no dad, I'm all right, and just goes stumbling on his way."

"Doesn't sound so serious, Inspector. He must be working on a plot for his next book that's giving him a hard time. Once he gets it licked, he'll be his old self."

"I'm not so sure, Healy. If that were the worst of it, I wouldn't be so worried, but there's something else."

"What?"

"He doesn't know what year it is. He keeps talking about how President Truman should do this or that. He can't understand why he can't get Jack Benny on the radio. He dresses in 1948 clothes—I don't know where he gets them. I tell him, 'E. Larry, it's 1976, not 1948,' but he just looks right through me, doesn't listen. He hums tunes from *Finian's Rainbow,* and when I mention Elton John or Mick Jagger, he doesn't know what I'm talking about."

"Gee, Inspector, I like Forties' show tunes, too, and I never

© *1976 by Jon L. Breen.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heard of Elton Who-did-you-say or Mack Jigger, either."

"Okay, okay, so that's not really our generation. But he also never heard of Kojak or Columbo or Archie Bunker or Johnny Carson, and he thinks Ronald Reagan's a movie actor."

Healy whistled. "Gee, Inspector, that sounds serious."

The birdlike Inspector Cune cocked his head at the fly-stained headquarters clock. "I'd do anything to bring him out of this, and this new case seems to be right up his alley. Of course, he's half an hour late as usual—"

At that moment E. Larry Cune stumbled into his father's office, banging his head on the door sill in the process. "Gosh, dad, I don't remember that door being so low."

"It's the same as the day this place was built, son," said his father wearily. "Perhaps you've grown."

"You're getting to be a regular Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Maestro," said Healy with forced heartiness.

E. Larry gave the sergeant a puzzled look. "Who? What?"

"A giant, like Wilt the Stilt."

"Wilt the Stilt?" E. Larry echoed, totally confused.

"Like George Mikan," E. Larry's father explained with a worried frown.

"Gee, dad, I'm not *that* tall," E. Larry remonstrated.

"Enough small talk. I have a tough case here, son, and I need your help."

"Sure, dad, just so it doesn't take too long. I have a book on the stove that'll make the world forget Philo Vance."

"Look, son, here's the situation. A man named Charlie Talbot was found shot to death last night in his apartment, a rundown place on the east side. Talbot was down on his luck, but he'd enjoyed great success as one of the slickest bunco artists around. In fact, a few years ago, he'd founded a firm of high-rise confidence men, real big-time operators. They were all gray and distinguished-looking types who seemed able to gain the trust of the smartest business minds in New York and suck them into fantastic agreements that would make buying the Brooklyn Bridge from a wino look like a shrewd deal. We managed to rout his gang a few years ago, when they went a step too far, but the mastermind Talbot escaped, and apparently so did one other."

E. Larry's features looked blank and bemused. Sergeant Healy inwardly doubted that this slack-jawed sadsack could ever have displayed the incisive, razor-sharp intellect that had been pulling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his father's chestnuts out of the fire for so many years.

"I don't remember the case, dad. You say his name was Talbot—"

"Yes, but he was better known as Ephraim Dean Arnold. Surely you remember that—half the executives on Manhattan blush at the mention of the name."

"Gee, I don't, dad. What year was that?"

Healy started to say, "Nineteen seventy—"

"Oh, I don't know, four or five years ago," Inspector Cune interrupted quickly. Now that E. Larry was showing some slight interest, he felt that insisting too hard that it was 1976 might cause a relapse. It would take great care to ease him back to reality.

"Talbot," the Inspector continued, "had recently been using the name Gene Arthur Effington and trying to pull some of his same old tricks, with less success. In the pocket of the shirt he was wearing when he died, we found five empty envelopes, each addressed to a prominent executive, people he apparently was going to try one of his bunco schemes on. But there was also an unfinished draft of a letter that we think was intended to go to one of them. We just don't know which. The letter read:

> Dear Joe,
>
> I was certainly disappointed at your failure to acknowledge my previous missive. I hope you know that my congratulations to you as the only one of our old bunch to stay on the top, when the rest of us were dropping like flies, were most sincerely meant. And I wouldn't want to think that you took my statement about what a word from me in certain prominent ears might do to your present good fortune as anything like a threat. Would I, if you'll excuse a lapse into the vernacular, rat on a pal?
>
> It happens, though, that I am somewhat financially embarrassed, and surely a true friend would be happy to help his old associate out in a time of

"It broke off there. We interpret it to mean that one of the old bunco ring is still out among 'em, so to speak, and that Talbot was threatening to expose him. And probably the recipient of that first letter sought Talbot out and killed him before the second even got finished and mailed."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And it seems likely that this second letter was going to go to one of those five executives the envelopes were addressed to."

"Right, son!"

"And therefore that one of the five addressees is the murderer."

"That's just what we think, Maestro," Healy put in.

"But which one?"

"That's the problem all right, son," said Inspector Cune.

"And the name Joe is probably no help, since the executive probably uses an assumed name, possibly the same one he used as a member of Talbot's bunco firm."

"And there are no Joes on the list anyway. The names are Wilton Frederick Comstock, Albert Gregory Post, Arthur Emsworth Endicott, Milborne Cosmington Fosdick, and Randolph Terwilliger Hooper."

"A formidable group of names," E. Larry mused. "Both in terms of influence and total syllables."

Inspector Cune smiled inwardly. E. Larry was getting involved. Perhaps his grand and glorious brain was about to shake its fog of disorientation.

"Dad, what were the names of the other members of Talbot's bunco firm, the ones you caught up with."

"You want their real names or their aliases?"

"Their aliases. I don't care about their real names."

"Well, there was one who called himself Eldon Jason, posed as a Western self-made millionaire, a rough-hewn character with a shrewd brain for business. He had a nickname. What was it, Healy?"

"Beans," said Healy. "Beans Jason, a real shifty character."

"Then there was Teel Armstrong, Eulalie Esther Jeeter, the only female member of the gang, Ames Eldon, Jason Ephraim Kane—"

"Another Ephraim and Eldon," E. Larry mused. "Not common names. I wonder why they should have been repeated. Did anyone reveal how they came up with these aliases, dad? Did each member of the gang come up with his own false name?"

"No, as a matter of fact, Talbot chose them all himself. Insisted on it. They say he had a genius for coming up with solid, trustworthy names."

"And usually three names, but not always. Could it be there was some subtle joke hidden in the names he chose? Let's review the aliases we *know* originated with Talbot, dad, starting with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ones he used himself. Ephraim Dean Arnold, Gene Arthur Effington, Eldon 'Beans' Jason, Teel Armstrong, Eulalie Esther Jeeter, Ames Eldon, Jason Ephraim Kane—I've got it!"

To his father's dismay E. Larry suddenly turned away and started talking to a blank wall.

"You see it, don't you? One of the names on the list of executives Talbot was going to write to fits right in with the list of his gang members' aliases. So perfectly there should be no doubt which of the names on the list belongs to a former gang member that Talbot was planning to blackmail. You can figure it out. You know everything I do."

"E. Larry," his father roared with exasperation, "who in hell are you talking to?"

E. Larry whirled around. "Nobody, dad, nobody. But I have your case solved. What do all those names have in common. Come on, Healy, you must see it."

" 'Fraid not, Maestro. They're just a bunch of names."

"Don't just look at the names on the paper. *Say them out loud.* Each name includes letters, initials. I don't mean the first letter of each word. I mean a letter that appears in the word as spoken. *Eu*lalie *Es*ther *Jee*ter. U.S.G. See what I mean? Or *Tee*l *A*rmstrong. T.R. Or *Ge*ne *Ar*thur *Eff*ington, G.R.F. And those initials also have something in common."

"What's that, son?" the Inspector asked, looking at his offspring blankly.

"Take the easiest one of all. *Eph*raim *D*ean *A*rnold. F.D.R."

"I get it!" Healy cried. "F.D.R.—Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And *Ja*son *Eph*raim *Ka*ne is J.F.K.—John F. Kennedy. They all have the initials of United States Presidents in their names."

"Right," said the Inspector. "*El*don '*Be*ans' *Ja*son would be L.B.J.—Lyndon Baines Johnson. And U.S.G. stands for U. S. Grant, T.R. for Theodore Roosevelt. *A*mes *El*don is A.L.—Abraham Lincoln."

"Now you see why some of the aliases had only two names," said E. Larry. "To represent the initials of Presidents who only used two names. And the repetition of Ephraim is explained—how many names are there with the initial F pronounced at the beginning of them?"

"Let's see," said Healy, concentrating intensely like a child with his first jigsaw puzzle. "*Ge*ne *Ar*thur *Eff*ington would be G.R.F. Who the heck is G.R.F.?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gerald Rudolph Ford, Healy," the Inspector explained patiently. "Our current President!"

"Gee, and that was the hardest one," said Healy.

"Now that we've belabored that point to the utmost," E. Larry said, "let's look at the list of executives and see which one fits."

Healy and the Inspector ran their eyes down the list. After a moment the Inspector said, "It has to be *Ar*thur *Em*sworth *En*dicott. R.M.N."

"Right, dad. The initials of another former President—Richard M. Nixon. Endicott is your man, and I urge you to get him down here for questioning right away."

But to Inspector Richard Cune something more important than putting the finger on a probable murderer had taken place. "E. Larry, listen—Nixon and Ford and Johnson and Kennedy all became President after 1960. Do you realize what that means?"

"What, dad?" E. Larry asked, puzzled.

"My son, you've come back from 1948!"

"Welcome home, Maestro," Healy said heartily.

"I don't know what you're talking about," E. Larry protested. "I know what year it is. But if President Winkler doesn't do something about the moon colonies pretty soon, I don't know where this country will be."

E. Larry was out the door en route to his typewriter before the Inspector or Healy thought to ask him what year it was.

"Q"

CRIMINALIMERICK

EQ

by D. R. BENSEN

Ellery's fond of his ease,
But detection is like a disease:
It drives him to action,
And then to distraction
When he can't see the woods for the trees.

© *1976 by D. R. Bensen.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once again Ellery is tested at The Puzzle Club . . .

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HONEST SWINDLER

by ELLERY QUEEN

"Who leads off this evening?" asked Ellery. It was his turn to crack the mystery.

"My gambit." Syres was the Founder of The Puzzle Club. The regular meetings took place in his Park Avenue penthouse, and his chef's *cordon bleu* dinners were never served until the challenged member had either triumphed or failed. So a hungry Ellery took the inquisitional armchair facing four of his five co-members—the fifth, Arkavy the Nobel biochemist, was in Glasgow attending one of his interfering symposiums—and was fortifying himself from the steam tray of Charlot's canapé works of art.

"The villain of tonight's Puzzle," began the multimillionaire who had made his oily pile in the Southwest, "is an old scamp, one of those legendary prospectors the West used to brag could live for months on beans and jerky in temperatures that would frazzle an ordinary man's gizzard or turn his blood to mush-ice."

"Old Pete's life," Darnell, the criminal lawyer, took up the tale, "has been one uninterrupted washout. Although he's tracked a hundred El Dorado-type rumors thousands of miles in his time, he's never once made the big strike. Only an occasional miserable stake scratched out of hardpan has kept Pete alive. Doctor?"

The psychiatrist, Vreeland, tapped the ash surgically off his two-dollar cigar. "Finally the mangy old fox becomes desperate. Frustration, loneliness, advancing years have whittled his wits to a fine edge; he plots a cunning—no, why plagiarize the shrinking violet? a brilliant!—scheme. To carry it off he sells just about everything in the world he owns. It brings him enough to pay for a display ad in *The Wall Street Journal*."

"*The Wall Street Journal*?" Ellery helped himself to the Scotch, looking delighted. "What imagination, what panache! Exactly how

Copyright © 1971 by Ellery Queen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

does your villain word his ad, by the way?"

Little Emmy Wandermere, who had just won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry, offered him a sheet of paper. On it she had penciled in her swashy hand:

Finance My Uranium Hunt!
Impossible to Lose!!
5-Year Money-Back Guarantee!
Complete Refund
Even If Uranium
Is Never Found!
Old Prospector, Box 1313

"Hardly a *Wall Street Journal*-type ad," Ellery said. "I'll put it down to poet's license, Miss Wandermere. And the response to Pete's pitch?"

"Heavy," the oil tycoon said. "You know what I always say—a sure thing gathers no moss. The dough comes rolling in."

"Can you give me a figure, Mr. Syres?"

"Well, let's say five hundred suckers invest $100 each to stake the old skunk for five years. That's $50,000. Agreeable, Miss Wandermere, gentlemen?"

The poet, the lawyer, and the psychiatrist nodded solemnly.

"In short, Mr. Queen," Dr. Vreeland said, "if Pete should strike uranium, the investors can realize many times their investments—"

"Would you believe like five thousand percent on their money?" winked the oil man.

"But even if he should fail," Lawyer Darnell chipped in, "every last investor at least gets back his original investment. That was Pete's offer."

"Do you mean that if I'd staked Pete to $100 of my money and he didn't find uranium, he'd give me my hundred back?"

"Your money, and that of every other investor."

Ellery meditated. The company waited. Finally Ellery said, "Did the old fellow find uranium, or didn't he?"

"If I may embroider the obvious, gentlemen?" The lady-poet's wicked blue eyes took on a faraway look. "Prospector Pete, better provisioned and outfitted than he's ever been outside his most beautiful dreams, sets out on his uranium quest. With the euphoria of his breed he spends years—in the deserts, the plains,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the mountains, the glaciers, from Baja, California, to the Rockies to Alaska and all stops between—patient years of foot-slogging, climbing, chipping, digging, panning, or whatever it is you do when you're looking for uranium. The sun fries him, the rain waterlogs him, snow and ice make a Father Frost out of him. Many times he nearly dies of thirst. He runs the risks of bear and cougar and, worst of all, of loneliness. It does seem as if he deserves a happy ending, Mr. Queen, but he doesn't get it. He finds absolutely nothing. Not a squawk or a wiggle in his Geiger counter. Until finally the time limit in his guarantee is up and he hasn't a cent left."

"Whereupon," Syres said, "old Pete makes good the promise in his ad."

To which Darnell added, with magnificent simplicity, "End of story."

There was a tranquil hush.

"Well," Ellery muttered. "I see. His money's gone, he's failed to find uranium, and still he manages to pay back every one of his backers. In full?"

"In full."

"Then and there? Not ten years later?"

"Within twenty-four hours," Dr. Vreeland said. "Question: How does Pete do it?"

"I suppose I had better rule out the obvious. He hadn't found something else of value? Gold, say? Diamonds? Platinum?"

Emmy Wandermere looked sad. "Alas, as they used to say, Mr. Queen. He found nothing."

"Or just before the five years were up, his long-lost uncle—on his mother's side, of course—died in Poona, Illinois, and left him ten billion lakhs?"

"Please," Lawyer Darnell said, pained. "Our man Pete is penniless when he runs the ad, his prospecting efforts produce an unrelieved zero, he doesn't have an uncle, and at the expiration of the five years he can't claim a single negotiable asset. His equipment is worn out and not worth the match to set it on fire, and even his burro has died of exhaustion."

"Yet every investor gets his money back *in toto*."

"Every investor, every dollar."

"Hm," Ellery said, reaching for the Scotch again.

"You have the usual one hour, Queen," Syres said briskly. "After that, as you know, Charlot's dinner—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yes, won't be edible, and I'm declared Nitwit of the Month." Ellery took an elegant swallow. "To avert both disasters I'd better solve your puzzle right now."

"How did old Pete manage to repay the entire $50,000 after five years in spite of his failure to find anything of value and winding up dead-broke?

"The answer has to be," Ellery said gently, "that *he never touched the $50,000 in the first place.* Didn't spend a dime of it. So when the time limit expired he was naturally able to give the whole sum back.

"But if he never touched the principal, how did he manage to finance five years of prospecting?

"Simplest way in the world," Ellery went on. "When he first collected the $50,000 from his backers, he deposited the entire amount in a savings bank. At, say, five percent interest the $50,000 would bring him an income of $2500 a year. $2500 a year was a sumptuous grubstake to a desert rat with one ancient burro to his name and a lifetime's practise in living on next to nothing.

"Old Pete was no swindler, and he certainly wasn't the scoundrel you deliberately painted him to set me off the track. He was simply a businessman following time-honored business practice. And now, fellow-puzzlers, shall we partake of Charlot's goodies?" Ellery flourished his empty glass. "I'm ready to eat Pete's burro."

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS, MR. QUEEN?

by MARK GRENIER

Though he brings many criminal lives to an end,
The life of each crime Queen prolongs,
For he not only sees that the villains are penned,
But sets about writing their wrongs.

© *1976 by Mark Grenier.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME DOSSIER

by OTTO PENZLER

RARE BIRD: John Ball, the creator of Virgil Tibbs, has just lived through an experience that might sound a trifle melodramatic for one of his fiction books. His lifetime of collecting produced one of the world's finest private collections of jade, each piece carefully selected for its beauty and rarity. Early this spring, a gunman forced his way into Ball's home, tied him up and threatened to kill him, and made off with most of the collection. The crooks involved were quickly apprehended but the art treasures had already been fenced and seemed hopelessly lost. However, less than two months later, the efforts of the Los Angeles Police Department led to the recovery of nine of the fourteen pieces. One had been smashed beyond reclamation and four others have still not turned up, but one of the pieces recovered is nothing less extraordinary than the original Maltese Falcon—not the Hollywood prop used in the Humphrey Bogart motion picture, but the original gem-encrusted statue which inspired Dashiell Hammett to write *The Maltese Falcon*. Today, it is again in the hands of its owner, thanks to the brilliant work of the LAPD. Even Virgil Tibbs would be impressed.

BOOM: Interest in Raymond Chandler, dead for seventeen years, continues to mushroom. In addition to Frank MacShane's authoritative *The Life of Raymond Chandler* (Dutton, $12.50), previously mentioned in this column, the famous pulp writer's many aficionados have a bonanza. The enterprising Southern Illinois University Press has just released *The Blue Dahlia* ($10.00 cloth, $3.95 paper), a previously unpublished screenplay. The handsome volume was edited by the well-known F. Scott Fitzgerald scholar Matthew J. Bruccoli, has a memoir by producer/director John Houseman, and includes a nice collection of illustrations from stills and lobby posters. Chandler received an Academy Award nomination for the screenplay and, even if you can't watch Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it's a golden hunk of Hollywood

ANNIVERSARY: Little magazines sometimes have a tough time surviving financially but, when they last a while, they provide continual joy to the faithful who supported them through those early years. One of the best and longest-lasting is *The Pontine Dossier,* celebrating its tenth anniversary with the recent issue. First the bad news. It is published only once a year and costs a hefty $5. The good news is that it is attractively printed and illustrated, and among the contributors are such luminaries as A. C. Lamprey (Robert L. Fish), Michael Avallone, creator of the popular Ed Noon, and Jon L. Breen, whose delightful stories appear frequently in *EQMM.* Devoted to the memory of Solar Pons, it is of considerable interest to all admirers of Sherlock Holmes. Copies may be ordered directly from Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, Ca.

© *1976 by Otto Penzler.*

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

MYSTERY STAGE: Yet another *Hound?* Arriving Off Broadway to generally favorable reviews, a new stage version of the world's favorite mystery drama was recently mounted by the Classic Stage Company Repertory, an innovative theater group partially sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. Written and directed by Christopher Martin, who dedicated his adaptation to the Baker Street Irregulars, he notes "The text is all but exclusively Conan Doyle." Alas, he borrows lines and dressing from other stories, so that the result is less than 99/100 percent pure.

The acting is uneven, although Tom Donaldson as Holmes was singled out for praise; the events on the moor are retold in a series of fast-moving blackouts with swirls of mist, atmospheric offstage howls and an inventive sound-and-light spectral hound.

The N.Y. Shakespeare Festival has inveigled a blistering new translation by Ralph Manheim and John Willett of the Bertolt Brecht-Kurt Weill *Threepenny Opera,* a vision of hell and the Victorian underworld. Perverse, repellent, murky, the stage is filled with beggars, gutter cutthroats, venal police, and dominated by the oily, rapacious Mack the Knife, one of the theater's most enduring rogues, in a devastating portrait of the lower depths.

A new opera, *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe,* written by the American composer, Dominick Argento, was performed to brilliant notices by the Minnesota Opera Company at St. Paul. Be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ginning with Poe's death in Baltimore and the premise (not verified historically) that Poe arrived at that city from Richmond by steamer boat, the opera charts that final voyage as a nightmarish delirium peopled by phantom figures from the author's life and writings. Tortured by doubt and failure, the dying poet and father of the mystery makes a suitable, larger-than-life subject for a distinguished dramatic opera.

Not all critics were kind to *Something's Afoot,* the murder musical in which a manor house does in a group of weekend visitors, but the now frequent appearance of such themes On and Off Broadway points to the profound influence of Agatha Christie, dramatist, on current mystery theater. *The Mousetrap* has been the longest-running success of New York's National Arts Club; there is now talk of a rotating repertoire of Christie plays. How interesting it would be to see such early stage pieces as *Alibi* (a version of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd)* or class revivals of such vintage theater as *Witness for the Prosecution* or *Ten Little Indians.*

© 1976 by Chris Steinbrunner.

INTERVIEW: STANLEY ELLIN

Every once in a great while, perhaps no more than once each decade, a short story writer comes along who is so skilled that he transcends his genre, his audience, and his time. The stories can be read by anyone, in any century, and be an immeasurable source of pleasure to those fortunate enough to encounter them. Although the word is dry and stodgy, those stories are classics. The best of Stanley Ellin is, simply, immortal in the mystery field.

EQMM: Which of your stories is your favorite—not for romantic or sentimental reasons, but the one in which you think you best achieved what you set out to do?

ELLIN: My personal favorite is "The Last Bottle in the World," the wine story. It's the one in which I took the greatest pleasure. The problem here was to get an ending which was right. I knew what the story was before I started writing, and I knew the ending. But the damn thing kept coming out in expository form at the end. If there is anything I hate it's where you have to take an eighteen-page story and you need someone to do the explaining in the last two or three pages. So I needed the structure, needed to have the whole thing set up correctly. When that came, I was delighted.

EQMM: Where did you get the premise for "Robert"? It's chilling. It's diabolical.

ELLIN: I thought it was rather charming. I don't know where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the idea came from.

EQMM: How about your most famous story, the first one, "The Specialty of the House"? On what was it based?

ELLIN: I think it was 1946 and meat was rationed. Jeanne and I were in this restaurant and they said, yes, we can provide meat. We were hungry, I mean really starved, for good red meat, so we placed our order. And the waiter disappeared. I mean the waiter disappeared. We sat there for five minutes, ten minutes, twenty minutes. By then we figured the steaks were already overcooked. We finally called over another waiter who shrugged, took our order himself, and served it. But our first waiter was never seen again. So right there Jeanne said they took the waiter because of the meat shortage—took him into the kitchen and cooked him. So there was a story. Nobody would publish it until I sent it to *EQMM* and Fred Dannay called to say he would not only use it, but it would win a prize. (It did: Best First Story of the Year—Ed.)

THE JURY BOX

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

And now, past the year's middle, we encounter three thrillers —the first of them a near-detective novel—which rank as sound and praiseworthy rather than distinguished, although they are backed up by one really notable achievement, a vast and erudite compendium of information about your favorite reading matter. If I can't cheer for any except the last-named, with entire justice I can commend. There's no occasion to gripe.

Legend in Green Velvet, by Elizabeth Peters (Dodd, Mead, $7.95), carries us to Scotland with our own attractive Susan, romantic-minded American girl who has been hired to assist a famous Scots archaeologist in his quest after ancient secrets.

Even before leaving Edinburgh for Professor Campbell's dig, Susan is swept into a whirl of sensationalism, stumbles across a murder, and among other enigmatic characters meets a young laird of more than picturesque heritage.

Vivid background as well as authentic history animate rapid-paced scenes which almost become detection. Though the author might have given us more clues to her master criminal, on page 221 she explodes a genuine surprise. Thenceforward, despite so many stabs of danger, the saga of Susan and her young laird whirls on to its satisfactorily happy end.

Set in near-future France under flamboyant President Florian,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colin Forbes's *The Stone Leopard* (Dutton, $7.95) erupts at once with violence, treachery, and intrigue.

An attempt to assassinate President Florian before leaving for his Moscow conference is frustrated by Police Prefect Marc Grelle, who shoots down the would-be killer but provokes only a storm of perplexities. "The Leopard," legendary Resistance hero of identity almost unknown, was also a Communist who would destroy all those opposing Russia. Though supposed dead for years, this dangerous enemy may secretly have become some high official in the French government.

Into the murderous game are drawn David Nash of America, Alan Lennox of Britain, and Colonel René Lasalle, former French Intelligence officer now exiled by President Florian. Since Moscow has sent a team of assassins to liquidate the only three witnesses who can identify Monsieur Leopard, we watch the murderers nailed one by one as they almost accomplish their mission.

That's not the end of uproar. The tale sweeps to its spectacular climax at Charles de Gaulle Airport, where Monsieur Leopard gets his deserts, ironically, from a weapon supplied for other purposes by the Soviet Union itself; and one more French crisis has forever passed into history.

Again narrated by British Secret Agent Philis of SR(2), Ritchie Perry's *Your Money and Your Wife* (Houghton Mifflin, $6.95) finds Philis enraged when his Norwegian honeymoon is interrupted by the kidnaping of the bride. And again it's Ubiquitous Plotter Petrov, K.G.B. To rescue his wife Philis, first name never used, must appear publicly as defector, traitor, and murderer.

All these he seems to be. His bondage whisks him from a remote cottage in Scotland, where Soviet vengeance executes one of their own defectors, to the East German prison officially called an insane asylum.

Again appearances are deceptive. Up their sleeves both Philis and Department SR(2) have been keeping cards concealed; only when our hero escapes from prison, taking with him another captive Briton, do we appreciate their play. And in London there's a final bloody exchange to settle the score at last.

With *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection,* by Chris Steinbrunner and Otto Penzler (McGraw-Hill, $19.95), my two colleagues across the alley have compiled a treasure house for casual readers as well as fans, and supplied the answer to almost any question.

Smooth, exhaustive, but always entertaining, it covers plays, films, radio, and television in addition to novels and short stories. If you have a favorite author or sleuth among the elect, you will find biographies of both. Lesser names have not been neglected, nor such writers from the long past as Anna Katharine Green, Jacques Futrelle, T.W. Hanshew.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One solemn note concerning the London Detection Club. Of some thirty original members when they elected me in 1936, only two of us now remain alive. But solemnity must not mitigate praise. This encyclopedia by my colleagues and their associates should become *the* definitive work for our time.

© *1976 by John Dickson Carr.*

REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

THE NIGHT OF THE TWELFTH, by Michael Gilbert. Harper & Row, $8.95.

On a quiet evening in June, Constable Toft methodically reported that a dead boy had just been discovered in a field east of Brading village... the third child from the area to have been killed in twelve months. In this intriguing, fast-moving suspense story suspicion soon centers on a nearby boys' school. This is one of Michael Gilbert's best and strongest novels.

"*The Night of the Twelfth* is a fine and grisly tale."—Stanley Ellin.

"The only trouble with my trying to give you a quote is that Michael Gilbert is so clearly a master of his craft that anything I might say would be superfluous."—Nathaniel Benchley.

FREEBOOTY, by Jack Foxx. Bobbs-Merrill, $8.95.

A humorous, historical suspense novel set in the 1860s which features a roguish Pinkerton detective named Fergus O'Hara. O'Hara is supposedly on company business as he plies his way up the Sacramento River on the riverboat *Freebooty*. The quiet journey proves to be more adventurous than a penny thriller: he becomes involved in two murders, a gold robbery, the Mulrooney Guards (a boisterous Irish militia), an insane parrot, a villainous one-eyed man addicted to horehound drops—and attempts on Fergus' own life. *Freebooty* is a colorful story with clues sprinkled like sequins that make it a sparkling guessing game of whodunit.

ROUSE THE DEMON, by Carolyn Weston. Random House, $6.95.

The third exciting police procedural starring Casey Kellog and Al Krug—models for the heroes of the TV hit *The Streets of San Francisco*. The murder victim is a hypnotist who was holding therapy sessions with a group of drug addicts. The hunt for his killer yields several promising clues and suspects. But nothing is as it first appears, and by the time Casey realizes how wrong they have been the murderer is confronting his last intended victim, whispering, "Didn't I tell you I'd have to do something?" A warning nobody listened to. And now it was too late...

WHERE HELEN LIES, by Rae Foley. Dodd, Mead, $6.95.

This is an absorbing novel of romance and danger about a girl who is safe only as long as she does not know who she is. Awakening in a drab hotel room, all she can remember about her past is leaning against a building, trembling and clutching a straw bag. In her nightmares she runs down endless corridors escaping a blazing fire or something even more terrifying. Left with few clues—an empty envelope and a help-wanted ad—she begins her search to learn her identity.

Rae Foley's recent novels include *The Barclay Place* and *The Dark Hill*.

[ADVERTISEMENTS]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EQMM BOOK DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT

The titles which we are offering this month are listed on page 19. These books are regular publishers' editions, the very same as those available in bookstores. Only those books which appear can be ordered; we are not in a position to order other books so please do not include any others on the Order Form.

HOW TO ORDER:

1. Fill in the quantities you wish to order of each title.
2. Fill in the "Discount Price" column by multiplying the quantity of each title ordered by the "Discount Price."
3. Add these totals and fill in the sub-total.
4. Fill in the shipping and handling charges by mutiplying the total number of books ordered by the appropriate charge, i.e., 1 to 3 books: 60¢ per book. 4 or more books: 35¢ per book.
5. Fill in sales tax if applicable.
6. Fill in the "Grand Total" of your order.

SHIPPING:

1. All orders will be shipped within 24 hours after they are received.
2. Out of stock titles will be shipped within 30 days.
3. All orders not completed in 30 days will be cancelled and money will be refunded.

PAYMENT:

1. Please enclose a check or money order with your order.

For Office Use Only

Check _____

M.O. _____

Other _____

Issue _____

SEND ORDER TO:

EQMM BOOK DEPT
P.O. BOX 17206
NASHVILLE, TN. 37217

ORDER FORM Please send me the following books:

Quantity	Title Number	Title	Discount Price

SHIPPING AND HANDLING CHARGE 1—3 Books add 60¢ per book 4 or more books add 35¢ per book	SUB-TOTAL
	POSTAGE & HANDLING Books at
Add 5% for delivery in Tennessee. Elsewhere, add sales tax applicable.	SALES TAX If Applicable
	GRAND TOTAL

SHIP TO:

Your Name _____

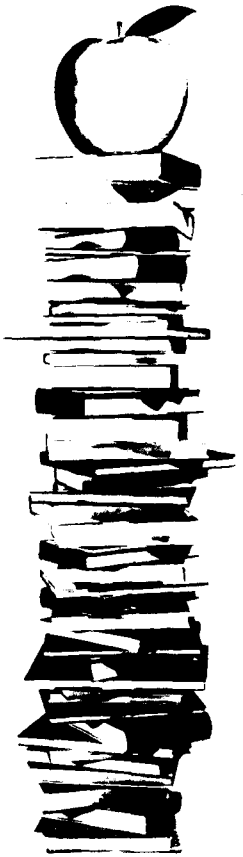
Address _____

City/State _____ **Zip** _____

Enclosed is my check or money order for $ _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stay healthy read wisely



ARCO BOOKS ON HEALTH & FITNESS

1. HOW TO BE HEALTHY WITH NATURAL FOODS
by Edward E. Marsh. A practical guide. **$4.50**

2. LITTLE KNOWN SECRETS OF HEALTH AND LONG LIFE
by Steve Prohaska. A treasury of health tips and good advice. **$5.95**

3. HOW TO LIVE WITH YOUR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
by Dr. William A. Brams. A clear and readable text on causes, symptoms and treatment. Illus. **$5.95**

4. HEALTH TONICS, ELIXIRS & POTIONS FOR THE LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUTH
by Carlson Wade. Easy-to-make, easy-to-use tonics, potions and elixirs. paper **$1.45**

5. BODY POLLUTION
by Gary Null. The poisons that pollute our food and what we can do about it. **$5.95**

6. NATURE'S MIRACLE MEDICINE CHEST
by Edward C. Burtis. How to achieve good health through everyday wonder foods. **$5.95**

7. NEW HOPE FOR INCURABLE DISEASES
by Drs. Cheraskin and Ringsdorf. What kind of diet and way of life prevents killer diseases. paper **$1.65**

8. REVITALIZE YOUR BODY WITH NATURE'S SECRETS
by Edwin Flatto. How to use the medicines of nature to restore health. **$4.50**

9. THE ILLUSTRATED CORONARY FACT BOOK
by Drs. Edwards & Gott. Foreword by Paul Dudley White, M.D. Coronary heart disease —its causes, treatment and prevention. 51 illus. **$4.50**

10. GET WELL NATURALLY
by Linda Clark. The natural ways of treating 22 of the most serious diseases. paper **$1.65**

11. ARTHRITIS CAN BE CURED
by Dr. Bernard Aschner. A world-famous doctor tells how he treated and cured his patients. **$4.50**

12. EAT TO LIVE
by Joyce Flaum. Scores of delicious recipes for low-salt and low-cholesterol diets. paper **$1.45**

13. HEALTHY HAIR
by J. & L. Thomson. Care and restoration of hair by natural methods. Illus. **$4.50**

14. HERB GROWING FOR HEALTH
by Donald Law. Complete illustrated guide to nature's healing herbs. How to grow them. Illus. **$4.50**

15. HOW TO INCREASE YOUR HEIGHT
by Dr. C. W. Linart & A. Blake. An exercise program to increase height and abolish backaches, fatigue and poor posture. Illus. **$3.95**

16. THE LOW-FAT WAY TO HEALTH & LONGER LIFE
by Dr. L. M. Morrison. A best-seller that gives Dr. Morrison's world-famous reducing program. paper **$1.65**

17. MANAGING YOUR CORONARY
by Dr. Wm. A. Brams. What to do and not to do after a coronary. paper **$1.45**

18. SLIPPED DISCS
by Dr. Kenneth C. Hutchin. The causes, symptoms and treatment of back troubles. **$4.50**

19. STOMACH ULCERS
by Dr. Sir Cecil Wakeley. How the stomach works. Factors that cause ulceration. **$4.50**

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
229 Park Ave. So., New York, N.Y. 10003

Please send me the book(s) I have circled. I enclose $
(plus 25¢ shipping costs for each book)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Raffles story by

BARRY PEROWNE

A. J. Raffles, the suave, immaculate, debonair cracksman and cricketer, versus Captain Boris Enani, the suave, immaculate, debonair villain with an ugly card up his sleeve. The hidden card was the threat of scandal in the Principality of Monaco where even the hint, the merest suspicion, of scandal meant polite expulsion from fashionable society—and that was something Raffles would not permit to happen to his sister Dinah. . . Again we take you to the turn of the century, this time in elegant Monte Carlo—with all the authentic color and atmosphere, precise in every stroke and detail, of fin-de-siècle *modes and manners. . .*

RAFFLES ON THE RIVIERA

by BARRY PEROWNE

The formal opening of the Oceanographic Museum built to house the trophies collected by the Prince of Monaco, famous yachtsman and ichthyologist, was a unique social occasion.

Among the beautifully dressed ladies and grey-toppered gentlemen who had the honour of paying their respects to the genial Prince and his gracious Princess, and of inspecting the exhibits, were A. J. Raffles, his young sister Dinah, and myself, Bunny Manders.

With us, as we sauntered under the outrigger canoes, harpoons, strangely shaped nets, and great fishes suspended from the lofty ceiling of the museum, was Raffles' friend Oppie, a fellow member of a respected London club to which Raffles belonged. It was thanks to Oppie, an influential Riviera resident, that we were present at this remarkable occasion, and he identified for us now some of the celebrities in the fashionable throng.

"There, for instance," he said, "is Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, the great newspaper magnate. And there's Sir Hiram Maxim, inventor of

© *1976 by Barry Perowne.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the automatic gun. The dapper gentleman he's talking to is Signor Guglielmo Marconi, joint winner last year of the Nobel Prize for Physics."

"No novelist, Dinah," said Raffles, "knows more about this Principality and the mysteries, intrigues, and hidden passions of the cosmopolitan society of the Riviera coast than good old Oppie."

"Oh, I know," said Dinah to Oppie. "Your novels are my favourites, because you set your plots in such beautiful, worldly places."

The novelist smiled at her. Urbane and experienced, he was an epicure of life's graces, and Dinah, with her fair hair and grey eyes, her lacy dress, becoming little hat, and the pretty parasol and small gold-mesh purse she carried, was a creditable young sister for Raffles to have.

"I'm sure your brother takes too good care of you, Miss Dinah," said Oppie, "for *you* ever to figure in the kind of plot I conjure from the air of this delectable coast. But if you'll excuse me, I must have a word with Sir Hiram Maxim. He's published a small book on the mathematics of roulette, and there's a point in it I'd like to take up with him. I'll be on the look-out for you at the Casino this evening."

As Oppie left us, Raffles drew the attention of Dinah and myself to the glass-topped specimen-case beside which we were standing. The case displayed, on a bed of sand, various shells and lumps of amber, together with starfish, coral, and oysters.

"You see, Dinah?" Raffles said. "Each of these oysters reveals a different stage in the process by which an intrusive grain of sand is transformed into a worthwhile end result."

"What a lovely end result!" Dinah exclaimed. "A beautiful big pearl! D'you think it's a real one?"

"That's a good question," said Raffles.

Immaculate, his keen face tanned, he was about to subject the exhibit to a more searching scrutiny when we were approached by a footman in the princely Grimaldi livery.

"Oh, look!" said Dinah, as we accepted glasses of champagne from the footman's proffered tray. "There's a notice over a doorway there saying: *To the Turtles*. Shall we go and see if they're live ones?"

"Why not?" said Raffles.

Taking our champagne with us, we passed through a low doorway, went down some narrow steps cut in rock, and found our-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

selves in a cavern. From iron-barred window apertures sun shone in onto a pool in the rock floor of the cavern. Four large turtles were swimming around in the pool, but their splashings were drowned by an intermittent surging sound which filled the cavern with hollow echoes.

The surging came from a round hole in a corner of the floor. A waist-high rail surrounded the hole and, when we looked down into it, it was like looking down a well with sea and sunshine at the bottom of it.

"A natural rock-shaft," said Raffles, "a sea blowhole."

Impelled by some ground-swell, the sea quenched the sunshine, deep down there, and came seething about halfway up the hole, then sank down to admit sunshine again into the sea-filled cavern below.

"I'd hate to fall down there," said Dinah.

"Your arrival in the Grimaldi Deep, mademoiselle," said a voice from behind us, "would make the mermaids jealous."

We turned. A man was standing there. In tailcoat and grey topper, a glass of champagne in one hand, the other hand behind his back, he was strikingly handsome, in his early thirties. And he was drunk.

Swaying slightly on his feet, he totally ignored Raffles and me.

"Have you not yet missed, mademoiselle," he said, his heavy-lidded dark eyes on Dinah, "something you put down on a specimen-case upstairs, the better to accept a glass of champagne?"

He took his hand from behind his back.

"Oh!" Dinah exclaimed. "My purse! Thank you very much."

She would have taken the purse, but he did not let go of it.

"Captain Boris Enani," he said, still holding the purse. And Dinah, too, was holding it, and she looked a little startled as Captain Enani, faintly smiling at her, sipped his champagne, clearly with no intention of releasing the purse until he got a response to his introduction of himself.

But, in Raffles' eyes, his sister Dinah was taboo to men who approached her when they were drunk and who looked at her as admiringly as this Captain Boris Enani was looking at her.

"Thank you," Raffles said. "*I* will take the purse for mademoiselle."

He took it, firmly, from both of them. He handed the purse to Dinah, took her arm, and, turning his back and hers on Captain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Enani, moved away with her towards the steps up from the cavern.

"So?" said Enani, deprived of introductions. He gulped the rest of his champagne. "*So!*" he said, with an ugly look at me, and he hurled his glass into the turtles' pool.

I ignored him and followed Raffles and Dinah to the steps, where a man standing a little way up moved aside courteously to let us pass on up and re-enter the museum.

Finding that the Prince and Princess were now gone and that the guests were leaving, we went on out into the blaze of sunshine, where Dinah opened her pretty parasol. On tall flagstaffs, pink-striped white banners bearing the golden Grimaldi blazon shimmered in the heat-currents, and glossy carriages were jingling away with the cream of Riviera society.

We ourselves had not far to go, for Raffles had obtained, from a rich acquaintance in England, the loan of a house—with its resident domestic staff—called the Villa Sappho. It was one of a number of pleasant villas dotted about, amid date-palms and massed blossoms, on the slope that dropped away steeply before us to the blue water of the harbour, where many fine yachts lay spotlessly white at their moorings. On its eminence at the far side of the harbour stood the elaborate white casino.

As, with Dinah between Raffles and myself, we strolled down the path to the Villa Sappho, Dinah said, "What a strange man, that Captain Enani!"

Raffles said nothing.

"Didn't *you* think so, Bunny?" Dinah asked me.

"A most curious man, Dinah," I concurred.

"Dear Bunny, what an agreeable person you are!" said Dinah, and she tucked her arm in mine.

But Raffles said nothing.

That evening, as we dined, just the three of us, at a candlelit table on the terrace of the Villa Sappho, I sensed a certain reserve between Raffles and Dinah. It made me a bit uneasy, for really they knew very little about each other.

They had grown up separately, owing to their parents' early demise, and had quite lost touch with each other—until Dinah suddenly had taken it into her head to leave the shelter of her guardian's roof and join her brother in London.

"What a problem, Bunny!" Raffles had said to me, at the time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I shall have to do something for her, of course. I'm her only relative. But, good God, I'm a dangerous brother for a girl to have! I may have Scotland Yard on my track any day. I'm currently England's cricket captain and, if I should be exposed as a criminal, there'll be an appalling scandal. It could affect Dinah's chances in life. The best thing I can do for her is take her abroad and amass a dowry for her, so that I can get her safely married into some European family of sound social and financial standing—while the going's still good!"

Accordingly, he had borrowed the Villa Sappho—where, as we sat now at dinner, we were waited on by the discreet, white-jacketed houseman, Latouche. He, his wife Marie-Claire, who cooked admirably, and their daughter Fanchon, the parlourmaid, constituted the resident domestic staff of the villa.

Because of the slight strain I sensed in the atmosphere between Raffles and Dinah, I was rather relieved when, Latouche having brought us our coffee and liqueurs and gone back in through the French windows, Dinah said she thought she would not come with us to the Casino, but would have an early night.

"Sleep well, my dear Dinah," said Raffles.

It was a warm night, the sky splendid with stars, as he and I walked together, in evening-dress but hatless, past the harbour where the yacht-lights twinkled, towards the brilliantly illumined Casino.

"The question is, Bunny," Raffles said abruptly, "did Dinah leave her purse on that specimen-case by mere oversight? Or had she noticed that fellow Enani staring at her? Was she intrigued by him? Did she leave her purse behind deliberately—to give him an excuse to make her acquaintance?"

"Raffles," I said, startled, "that hadn't occurred to me!"

"For the simple reason," Raffles said, "that you know no more about the character of my sister Dinah than I do."

I knew this much—that I was in love with her. But I dared not let Raffles suspect it. If one day he should stand in the dock at the Old Bailey, it was odds on that I should be standing there beside him. So I was far from being the kind of suitor he was seeking for Dinah, and I had to watch my step.

I pointed out to him now that, if he knew little about his own sister, she knew as little about him.

"In fact, Raffles," I said, "I think she's been wondering about all the expensive clothes and things you've bought her. Anyway, she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

asked me something, the other day, that I don't think she quite likes to ask you personally."

"What did she ask you, Bunny?"

"She asked me where your money came from."

"Did she, by God! What did you tell her?"

"Oh, I fobbed her off, Raffles. I told her it was difficult for a girl to understand a gentleman's financial arrangements—especially if he's England's cricket captain—and I advised her not to bother her head about such tedious matters."

"What did she say?"

"She said she wouldn't."

"Well done, Bunny," Raffles said. "But if she feels some sort of attraction to this Captain Boris Enani, I want to know something about the fellow—and if anybody can give us chapter and verse on Riviera characters, it's my fellow clubman Oppie who said he'd be at the Casino this evening."

But the first person we saw, when we entered the Casino's spacious foyer, all glittering chandeliers, red plush banquettes, and gilt-rich walls, was not Oppie. It was Captain Boris Enani.

"Over there, at the *vestiaire* counter," Raffles murmured to me. "If he sees us, pay no attention to him."

Out of the corner of my eye, as we collected our *cartes d'entrée* from the three liveried functionaries at the high desk, I saw Enani on the far side of the foyer. His back was to us. In evening-dress, hatless, his hair ash-blond, he was collecting a white silk scarf from the *vestiaire*. People were going to and fro, passing in and out.

Enani turned, putting his scarf on carelessly. He was swaying slightly, drunk again. But he saw us. I felt him staring after us as, paying no attention to him, we crossed to the arch of the atrium, where a man stood aside courteously to let us pass through to the roulette tables.

"Enani's gone, Bunny," Raffles murmured, casting a quick glance back over his shoulder as he offered me a Sullivan from his cigarette-case.

"He's drunk again," I remarked.

"Yes," Raffles said thoughtfully. "Very. Keep an eye open for Oppie."

Throngs four-deep surrounded the roulette tables in the atrium. Jewels glittered, starched shirtfronts gleamed. Through the restrained hum of voices sounded the ritual chanting of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

croupiers as their ebony rakes slid towers of gold louis and stacks of bank-notes to and fro across the green cloths, watched over by the *chefs-de-partie* on their high rostrums at each table. Here and there, against the panelled walls, lurked keen-eyed men in evening-dress.

"Oppie country," Raffles murmured to me, "the most discreetly policed Casino in the world."

We wandered from table to table, trying a stake here and there, but it was not our night, and I was glad when Oppie joined us. We had a drink with him in a small bar off the foyer, and Raffles asked him if he knew anything about a Captain Boris Enani. The novelist nodded.

"I've been watching the baccarat in the *salles privées*," he said, "the shrine of the Golden Goat. Enani was in there just now, playing against the Greek Syndicate's bank. He left, about an hour ago, with a pocketful of their money."

"Did he now," Raffles said softly. "Tell me, Oppie, is it true that the Casino has a big winner shadowed to make sure he reaches safely wherever he's going?"

"Yes, that's true of a big winner, Raffles. But Enani's win, the equivalent of about three thousand pounds—bank-notes—wasn't enough to warrant that service." The author lighted a cigar, his shrewd eyes, under strongly marked black brows, studying Raffles. "What's your interest in Enani?"

"His interest," Raffles said, "in my young sister Dinah. And hers—possibly—in him."

"Ah! Then your question has merit, Raffles. Women are Boris Enani's—hobby. Women and cards. He's believed to be the bye-blow, the illegitimate son of a Balkan king, and to receive a handsome allowance so long as he stays out of his own country and involves himself in no political plots against his royal sire."

"An Oppie character, in fact," Raffles said.

"Yes," said the novelist, "I must hatch a plot I can use him in, one of these days. 'Lucky at cards,' they say, 'unlucky at love.' That doesn't seem to be true of Boris Enani. He wins both ways. Several Riviera ladies of previously unblemished repute are rumoured to have succumbed to his slumbrous charm. One wonders if the lucky Lothario has some extra card up his sleeve—when he plays games with the fair sex."

"Oppie," Raffles said, "many thanks for this information."

"From one clubman to another," said Oppie. "I'm going back to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the *salles privées*. Are you and Manders coming?"

But Raffles excused us, and, as the novelist left us, gave me a hard look. "An extra card, Bunny?" Raffles said. "I wonder. If Enani took a quick look into Dinah's purse this morning, he'd have found cards in it—visiting-cards that I had printed for her, with the address of the Villa Sappho. When he saw us here at the Casino—*without* Dinah—can he have thought it, drunk as he was, a good opportunity to pay a private call on her?" He stood up abruptly. "Let's get back to the villa."

As we walked briskly down the sloping road from the Casino, with the harbour lights reflected in the water on our left, a *fiacre* was coming up the slope. I heard the passenger call to the cabbie to stop. The horse jingled to a standstill level with us. Dinah, in an evening cloak, the hood thrown back, her hair fair in the light from the white globe of a streetlamp, looked out at us.

"I'm so glad I've found you!" she said.

Raffles told the cabbie to take us to the Villa Sappho. We got into the *fiacre* with Dinah, and Raffles asked her if Enani had come to the villa, and she said that he had—about half-an-hour after we had left.

"So he lost no time," Raffles said, "after he saw us in the Casino, Bunny. Dinah, did you let Latouche admit him?"

"The Latouches weren't there," she said. "Their other daughter, Fanchon's married sister, was having a birthday party, so I told them they could go to it."

Over the clip-clop of the horse's hoofs and the harness jingle, the cabbie on his box, his back to us, could not possibly hear her voice as Dinah told us that, when the Latouches had left, she had gone into her bedroom. She had opened the curtains and stepped out to the balcony.

"It was all so pretty," she told us, "the stars, and the lights in the harbour and over in the Casino. I could hear the crickets in our garden and music in the distance."

After a few minutes she had gone back into her bedroom, leaving the French windows ajar, but closing the curtains. As she started to get ready for bed, she had heard a sound on the balcony. The curtains had parted. Captain Enani had stepped in.

"I told him to leave at once," Dinah said, "or my brother would kill him."

I knew that was true, for I knew Raffles, and though he said not a word, the hair stirred on my scalp.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But you can't kill him now," Dinah said, and she drew in her breath, deeply, with a tremor in it. "He's dead."

Hoofs clopped, harness jingled. Dinah told us that Enani had seized her hands, covered them with kisses. She had told him he was mad or drunk or both, and had wrenched her hands free.

"And then?" Raffles said, very softly.

My heart thumped. How could Dinah have killed the man? With what weapon? Pistol? Scissors? But no, she told us that Enani had taken from the pocket of his white waistcoat a small phial of pills. Poison, he had said. One kiss from her lips, he had said, or he would kill himself in her bedroom and the scandal would ruin her.

"And then?" said Raffles.

"I told him he was mad and a coward," Dinah said, "and would never do it. But—he did! He swallowed one of the pills. He had—a sort of seizure. He contorted. He fell back across my bed. I couldn't believe it! I ran out and came to find you."

Raffles took her hand.

"Dinah," he said, "those pills, of course, were about as lethal as sugar candy. If, from fear of scandal, you'd paid that man his ransom of a kiss, he wouldn't have stopped at that. But you called his bluff. I'm surprised he bothered to go through with his charade. Don't worry, Dinah. When we get to the villa, we'll find him gone—but he'll have to go a long, long way before he escapes settlement of this little account I have with him."

He laughed, without mirth.

"You see, Bunny?" he said to me. "We're in a Principality where scandal is inadmissible. It means, for those involved, whether innocent or guilty, polite expulsion. If it becomes rumoured that one is *persona non grata* in the Principality of Monaco and Monte Carlo, one is no longer received anywhere in good society. So we now know the extra card up Boris Enani's sleeve in his games with women—the ugly card of scandal. For fear of it, women yield to him—and afterwards, from the same fear, keep silent."

The *fiacre* pulled up at the gate of the Villa Sappho. Raffles paid off the cabbie. In the house the lights were on. The Latouches were not yet back. All was still.

"To put your mind at rest, Dinah," Raffles said, "I'll just take a look into your bedroom. Wait here in the salon."

He went upstairs to Dinah's room. I followed him. Her bedroom

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

door stood wide-open. The lights were on. Raffles stopped dead on the threshold. Over his shoulder I saw Enani. He lay sprawled on his back across Dinah's bed. Raffles moved forward, into the room. I followed, staring, unbelieving.

Enani's hands were clamped on the bed coverlet, his face was congested and mottled, his jaw fallen; his bulging eyes gleamed blindly in the light.

Raffles stooped over the bed, slid a hand under the breast of Enani's dinner-coat, sniffed the man's mouth.

"Close those curtains, Bunny."

The window-curtains were slightly parted. I closed the gap and turned. Raffles was picking up from the carpet a small phial of pills and its cork. He corked the phial, pocketed it, and went back downstairs. I followed.

Dinah was standing in the salon, an intent question in her eyes.

"Dinah," Raffles said, "Bunny and I have a little job to do before the Latouches get back. We won't be long. Sit down. Don't worry. Bunny, give her a brandy."

While I poured Dinah the drink, Raffles crossed to the *escritoire* and let down the flap. He wrapped his handkerchief round his hand, took from the pigeonholes some sheets of notepaper, held them up to the light, then pocketed them. He took from a pigeonhole a small pot of gum with the brush-handle protruding through the top. He pocketed the pot of gum, then tucked his handkerchief back into the breast-pocket of his dinner-coat.

He ran back upstairs. I followed. He went into his own bedroom, returned in a moment, pocketing a pair of black kid gloves. He handed me a pair, told me to put them in my pocket, and went back into Dinah's room. I followed.

"What do you intend to do?" I said. I could hardly breathe.

"I intend to do the only thing that can prevent a scandal that would ruin my plans for Dinah's future," Raffles said. "I intend an act of oblivion. Come on, up with him!"

We lugged Enani up off the bed and, each taking one of his arms around our shoulders, carried him, facing forward between us, his head lolling on his shirtfront, the ends of his white silk scarf dangling, his feet dragging like a comatose inebriate's down the stairs and out to the garden gate.

"A warm night, a starry night," Raffles said, "and not much past eleven o'clock. There'll be people strolling by the sea or sit-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ting at the sidewalk tables of the seafront cafés. So every access to the briny is useless to us, Bunny—except, let's hope, just one."

I knew now where we were going as we bore Enani up the sloping path which we had followed, both up it and down it, that very morning. Here and there, among the date-palms on either side of the path, shone the white globes of lamp-standards. Crickets chirred tranquilly amid the blossoms. We saw nobody. We had not far to go before the Oceanographic Museum loomed up before us, its lofty windows reflecting starshine.

The building stood on a slope, so the rear windows were more accessible than those in front; and at the rear of the building we laid Enani down.

"There may or may not be a watchman in the building," Raffles murmured, as we put on our gloves. "We've got to risk it."

He held a sheet of notepaper to the glass of the window before which we stood. He brushed gum over the paper, reversed it, and pressed the paper to the glass. This was not the first time I had seen him use the little implement he carried, which had a diamond cutting-edge. It squeaked slightly as he etched it around the paper.

He gave a corner of the paper a sharp tap with the implement. A fragment of glass fell inward, scarcely audible. He inserted the implement into the hole and levered the square of glass gently outward. It came, adhering to the paper, with a slight cracking sound. He laid the glass on the ground and reached in to the window-latch. The window opened inward, and Raffles went in, soundless, over the sill.

I heaved Enani up and, between us, we lifted him inside.

"Hold him," Raffles whispered, and was gone.

Starshine glimmered down through the skylights of the lofty ceiling. Here and there, from the glass-topped specimen-cases, gleamed points of phosphorescence, as of glow-worms. From a dark doorway to my right sounded faint splashes and an intermittent surging sound. A shadow moved. Raffles was back.

"When the broken window's found, Bunny," he whispered, "the police will wonder what the intruder was after. It's advisable to give them a reason, so I've picked the lock of the oyster-case and taken the exhibit 'pearl.' The police will think, let's hope, that the intruder was gullible enough to think it a *real* pearl. It should give them a laugh. Now, let's do what we're really here for."

Between us we carried Enani through the dark doorway, down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the narrow steps, into the turtles' cavern. In the faint starlight from the iron-barred window-apertures facing seaward, the turtles splashed restlessly in their pool. The intermittent surge of the sea in the blowhole filled the cavern with hollow echoes.

"Lay him down for a minute," Raffles said. "There's something I want from him."

"Of course!" Belatedly, the thought flashed upon me as we laid Enani down on the rock-floor and Raffles dropped on one knee beside him. "His baccarat winnings!" I said.

"Bunny," Raffles said, his hand busy at Enani's collar, "when I felt for his heartbeat, back there in Dinah's room, I felt also for his bank-notes. He had neither the one nor the other."

He stood up. I glimpsed in his hand Enani's white silk scarf.

"Now, come on," Raffles said. "Up with him!"

He pocketed the scarf. Together we lifted Enani over the waist-high rail surrounding the blowhole. For a moment we held him, by his ankles, suspended over eternity. Then we let him go, and I heard the sea surge up the dark shaft to receive him.

"And this false pearl can follow him," Raffles said.

He tossed the exhibit down the shaft, and we stole back up the rock steps and left the cavern to the restless Grimaldi turtles.

But what had happened to Boris Enani's baccarat winnings? And why had Raffles taken Enani's white silk scarf?

There were questions in my head, and forebodings, when I went down in the morning to breakfast on the terrace of the Villa Sappho.

Sleek in his white jacket, Latouche was setting down on the table a tray bearing crisp croissants and fragrant coffee.

"*Mademoiselle et messieurs sont servi,*" he said, and with his discreet smile and a slight bow went back in through the French windows.

The sky was blue. Monaco lay spread before us, with its fine buildings and harbourful of yachts, a haven of riches, tranquil in the opaline glory of the Mediterranean morning.

I noticed faint, violet shadows under Dinah's grey eyes as she poured the coffee, but Raffles, in a light suit, a pearl in his cravat, seemed his usual easy-going self.

He suggested that we lunch at the Café de Paris, opposite the Casino.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"One sees such interesting people going to and fro past that corner," he said. "It is to Monaco as the corner of the Rue de la Paix is to Paris—everyone passes it sooner or later."

At a table under a sun-umbrella on the café terrace, thronged with the usual gay, fashionable crowd, we lingered long over lunch, watching the comings and goings of the Principality's citizens and visitors.

Dinah grew restless. "Why don't we go somewhere else?" she asked.

"Personally," said Raffles, "I like this corner. But, Bunny, why don't you take Dinah to see the *Jardin Exotique*? It's said to have a thousand varieties of cactus."

To my surprise Dinah fell in with this suggestion, and I understood why, a little later. For, as we strolled together, Dinah with her pretty parasol raised, along a path through that high-up, prickly garden of rust-red and yellow blossoms, she asked me a question.

She said, "Bunny, what became—last night—of Captain Enani?"

"Dinah," I said, "your brother would like you to put Captain Enani out of your mind. He won't be bothering you again."

She was silent for a while, as we wandered on, then she said, "I believe my brother thinks I left my purse on that specimen-case in the museum *deliberately*. But, Bunny, I didn't."

"I'm glad, Dinah," I said. "Thank you for telling me that."

"It's strange," she said. "Sometimes I think I love my brother. But sometimes—I'm not sure."

"That, Dinah," I explained, "is because you don't yet know him as well as I do."

"What a loyal person you are, Bunny!" she said, with a smile, and she linked her arm with mine.

It was a way she had, but I wished she would not do it to me, for her touch set up a cardiac turbulence in me, and in Raffles' eyes she was no less taboo to me than she had been to the late Boris Enani. In the circumstances, as I did not trust myself when alone with Dinah, I thought it prudent to suggest that it was time we rejoined her brother.

But Raffles was gone from the café opposite the Casino. Nor did we find him at the Villa Sappho when we returned there. So I was alone with Dinah, willy-nilly, all through dinner, which we had at the candlelit table on the villa terrace.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I found it so hard to keep my eyes off Dinah that, as the hour grew late, I was relieved when she decided to retire. I saw her light come on, in a window upstairs. She was not now using the bedroom in which Boris Enani had played out his tragic farce. I watched her window. Once or twice, across the curtains, I saw her shadow pass. Taboo!

Crickets chirred in the garden. The lights of Monaco twinkled. I must have drowsed. Suddenly a hand fell on my shoulder and I sprang to my feet.

"It's all right, Bunny," Raffles said. "Come inside. Bring the brandy."

I followed him into the salon. He closed the French windows, drew the curtains together, crossed to the door, opened it, listened for a moment, then shut the door. He poured himself a brandy.

"Bunny," he said, "d'you remember the courteous gentleman who stood aside for us to pass through the atrium arch to the roulette tables in the Casino?"

"Vaguely," I said. "I hardly noticed him."

"D'you remember," Raffles said, sitting down in an easy-chair, "that when Oppie told us Enani had about three thousand pounds in baccarat winnings on him, I asked if the Casino had a big winner followed—for his own safety?"

"Yes. But Oppie said Enani wasn't a big enough winner for that."

"So," said Raffles, "the courteous gentleman, who gave me a distinct impression that he was following Enani when Enani left the Casino, wasn't a Casino agent. But I had a feeling I'd seen that courteous gentleman before. And I remembered where. He was the same man who stood politely aside for us on the steps up from the turtles' cavern after that little scene in the morning, when Enani returned Dinah's gold-mesh purse."

Raffles drank his brandy, lighted a Sullivan.

"You see, Bunny?" Raffles said. "If the courteous gentleman was keeping an eye on Enani in the morning, when he had no baccarat winnings on him, it wasn't for the money that Enani was followed out of the Casino in the evening. So what was the courteous gentleman following Enani for?"

"Raffles," I breathed, "I can't imagine!"

"Neither could I," Raffles said wryly. "But I was certain that the courteous gentleman *did* follow Enani from the Casino. And Enani came straight here to the Villa Sappho. Dinah was on her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

balcony—like Juliet. So the courteous gentleman saw Enani, that evil Romeo, watching Dinah from the garden. And saw him pull him himself up on to the balcony and enter her room. And the courteous gentleman himself climbed to the balcony. Through the gap in the curtains he watched the scene between Enani and Dinah. He saw Enani collapse on the bed—and Dinah run out of the room."

Raffles took a small phial of pills from his pocket.

"Am I giving you a headache, Bunny? Try one of Enani's pills. I've tried one myself. They're aspirin."

"But Enani was *dead* on Dinah's bed!"

"Yes, Bunny," Raffles said. "But it was pretty evident, from his face, that he hadn't died of poison. There was never the slightest chance that Enani would have swallowed one of those pills if they'd been poison. No, Bunny, when Enani played out his ugly farce and 'collapsed,' and Dinah ran out, Enani started drunkenly to get up off the bed—but the courteous gentleman came at him through the curtains. Bunny, Enani died of strangulation."

Raffles poured himself another brandy.

"I'm much obliged to the courteous gentleman, Bunny. But I wanted to see him again. So I watched for him from the terrace of the Café de Paris on that corner everyone in Monaco must pass sooner or later. And he passed by about an hour after you took Dinah to the *Jardin Exotique*."

"You followed him?" I said, my throat dry.

"To a street called the Rue des Oliviers," Raffles said. "The courteous gentleman has a small office there. He stayed in it rather a long time. When he left, I went in—with the aid of the little picklock I carry. In the office was a metal filing-cabinet—locked. I got it open. I found a thick file in it—carbon copies of reports, in French, on Boris Enani, over the past eighteen months."

"Reports?" I said.

"Addressed," said Raffles, "to a postbox number in a Balkan capital. The reports told all, Bunny. Enani *is* the bye-blow of a royal person—who's had him watched, got tired of his doings and the expense of his fat allowance, and ordered the royal agent, that courteous gentleman, to remove the nuisance. And the courteous gentleman saw his opportunity when he witnessed the scene in Dinah's room."

Raffles looked at me with a dancing vivacity in his eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Incidentally, Bunny," he said, "the courteous gentleman treated himself to a bonus. It was locked in his metal filing-cabinet. Catch!"

He tossed me a thick sheaf of bank-notes held together by a paper band.

"Enani's baccarat winnings," he said, "and a good start for amassing a dowry for Dinah, after you've taken your share."

"No," I said, twisting the arrow in my own heart. "All for Dinah's dowry."

I handed him back the bank-notes. He gave me a strange look.

"All right, Bunny," he said quietly. "I shall remember." His tone changed. "Anyway, I left a receipt in the courteous gentleman's filing-cabinet. It seemed only right that he should have a receipt for this three thousand pounds. So I left him the thing he strangled Enani with. I left him," said Raffles, with a wicked look, "Enani's white silk scarf."

The door-handle turned. My heart stopped. The bank-notes vanished into Raffles' pocket. The door opened and Dinah was standing there. She came in. She was in *negligée*, her fair hair in two braids, her grey eyes, so like his own, on Raffles.

"I couldn't fall asleep till I knew you were back," she said to him. "Then I heard you talking in here."

"And did you," said Raffles gently, taking a Sullivan from his cigarette-case, "hear what we were talking about?"

"Why, no," said Dinah. "What was it?"

"We were talking," Raffles said, "about the kind of plot of mystery, intrigue, and passion that your favourite novelist conjures from the air of this delectable Principality. I ran into him an hour ago. He was coming out of the Casino, so we had a nightcap together. He's invited you and Bunny and me to tea to-morrow—or, rather, to-day—on his yacht."

"On his yacht? Oh, how exciting!" Dinah exclaimed. "I've never had tea on a yacht before. What d'you think I should wear?"

Her brother smiled.

"That's a good question, Dinah. Your favourite author knows all the best people, so you'll probably meet some of them on board. In the circumstances, and I'm sure Bunny will agree with me, there'll be no danger of our breaking the bank if we take you shopping in the morning for something especially attractive for you to wear," said A. J. Raffles, "at the tea-party with Oppie—with Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 449th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. . .an exceptional first story—of wounded spirit, of betrayal and bitter reality . . .

The author, Dorothy Benjamin, is a "proud grandmother" and the "owner of a small mail-order business producing First Day Covers (cacheted envelopes for stamp collectors) for each United States postal issue." Her hobbies and interests are "many and varied"—reading, baseball, portrait painting, Oriental brush painting, chess, birdwatching, visiting museums and old cemeteries, the occult, and sunset viewing. Writing, however, is her "principal interest . . . what a thrill when one of my 'people' takes off and does or says something totally unexpected, yet so true to character" . . .

We will tell you more about Mrs. Benjamin with her next story—we are that certain there will be a second one soon. . .

SOUND OF A DISTANT ECHO

by DOROTHY BENJAMIN

Mereno assumes the perennial boxing stance, his muscles bulging, and jabs the air one-two in my direction.

"El bravo," I sneer, and rear back against the sink as his fist cuts through the air like a sickle.

Lowering his fists he growls, "Where's my lunch?" He opens the refrigerator, pincers his beefy hands around five cans of beer, swings the door shut with an oddly graceful twist of his leg, and slams the cans down on the table.

Hurriedly I grab the bread knife from the sink drainboard, slice in three the hero sandwich I'd made before our fight began, and place the sandwich before him. Mereno scans it, a master architect inspecting a student's practise model, seeking a flaw for which he can gleefully pounce on the hapless student.

© 1976 by Dorothy Benjamin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Gonna eat?" His black eyes flick over me as if I'm an addendum to the design. Though my nerves scream no, I nod yes. The better part of valor is to pacify him. He hates to eat alone.

Turning to the sink where the sandwich makings are spread on the drainboard, I glance out the window above, the only one in this dump from which I can glimpse the summer sky, and wonder: What am I doing in this place? I, who love the sky, trees, green grass, who grew up on the land?

I remember the feel of spring earth under my bare toes—my stepmother Ethalyn's herb garden of sage, thyme, rosemary—the green oasis beyond the furrowed fields where I'd hide shielded by a canopy of buttonwood leaves, to brood over my constant yearning for approval and affection from my father, a morose bull-necked man given to cuffings and black looks—

"What the hell is takin' you so long?" The cans of beer jump as Mereno pounds the table and I am wrenched back to the reality of the present.

Someone coughs outside our door. That will be Justina, Mereno's babytalking older sister. In a moment she'll waddle in. Her sly cough is a warning not to be caught intimo, Justina's way of letting me know she never forgets I'm not her brother's wife.

"Hawhoa, Ahwison. Just get up?" Justina's eyes, embedded in fat, gleam like jet-black marbles. A twin to her mother, except for Mamacita's matriarchal air of authority.

Tugging at my half-buttoned blouse, I glance into the cracked mirror propped on the window sill, my reflection split into jagged halves, and make a one-handed stab at smoothing my unkempt hair. My hair is what attracted Mereno in the beginning. He has a thing about blondes, but until me nary a natural one.

So used to his blondes were Mamacita and Justina that when I met them each one asked, "Wha' bottle that color from, eh?" To which Mereno answered proudly, "Her hair is natural." I used to take care of my hair then, brushing the regulation one hundred strokes every night.

Pushing for status, I play the hostess and ask Justina, "How about lunch?"

"H'm—" Her eyes follow the knife as I slice my sandwich. "I had an erwey breakfast." If Justina's had an erwey breakfast it's a sure bet she'll have an erwey lunch.

I begin preparing another sandwich, thinking how ludicrous for a forty-year-old to babytalk. It's as if a mannerism Justina once

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affected had become routine. It reminds me of the girls I met when I went east to college, who took b*ah*ths in b*ahth*tubs. I suppose their affectations became routine too. Though I wouldn't know. In the throes of first love, by turns on Cloud Nine feeling loved at long last, then in despair over the affair's abrupt end, I didn't crack a book and dropped out, and was too scared of my father to go home.

I reach for the kettle. "Justina, I'll make tea. Okay?" Neither of us drinks beer. Mereno, I notice, has already emptied a couple of cans.

Justina gives me her no-yo-comprendo act. "Coffee, Ahwison. It's not too much troubew—?" She comprendos all right. Mereno doesn't allow me to buy instant so that I'll have to brew a whole damn pot for her. I purse my lips and reply, "No trouble at all."

Sitting in his undershirt, as my father always did at the table, Mereno flexes his biceps and grunts a bueno. He can't stand his sister, or his mother for that matter, but they're *his* and woe betide me if I fail to observe what he considers the amenities.

Justina plunks herself down beside Mereno, giggling, and punches his biceps on the arrowed twin heart tattooed there, oblivious of his scowl. Brother and sister like to pass themselves off as pure Spanish, but Mamacita once let it drop that her muchachos are only one-quarter Spanish. Give or take un poco.

At the sink I run water in the pot, dump coffee into the basket, and slap the pot down on the stove. Mereno shoots me a dirty look and I move quickly to the window to keep from making a retort. He has a low boiling point. Someday, sure as I stand here, he will bash my face in. Not that he hasn't already tried.

Once, if a man laid a brutish hand on me, I'd vamoose like a streak of wind. With Mereno I exist on a residue of hope, my rationale for remaining with him. I remember that he gave me a home three years ago Christmas, when I was bitter and broke.

The guy I'd been living with skipped, leaving me with a raft of unpaid bills. I had barely $13 to my name, so I skipped too, vowing the next twosome was going to be legal. Now I just wanted security. At a loss what to do, where to go, I paused in front of a store displaying gift blouses, and over the loudspeaker came a voice singing: "I'll be home for Christmas." With something akin to shock I remembered Ethalyn's last words to me the day I left for college, as if she'd had an intimation of the future: "You'll be home for Christmas?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course!" I'd cried, so nervous at leaving home at 17 that I couldn't wait to return.

"Come *on*," my father had pushed me, scowling as usual. He drove me to the railroad depot and left without a backward glance after imparting a few words of fatherly advice: "Don't come back a know-it-all." He'd never shown me a bit of affection, so why should I have felt bereft because he didn't show me any then? How he must have taunted Ethalyn when, embroiled in my freshman affair, I wrote I wouldn't be home for Christmas after all. It was Ethalyn who had encouraged me to try for the scholarship.

I'd been ashamed to write her after dropping out, but standing in front of the store, I decided to send her a blouse for Christmas, certain she'd need to be saving her old worn one to wear to church, if it were up to my father.

I wanted to write *Mother* on the card accompanying the blouse, but I hadn't called Ethalyn that since I was eleven years old when I discovered she wasn't my real mother. Memory of the long-forgotten sound of Ethalyn's rocker came to me—like the sound of a distant echo. I fled from the store, boarded a bus not caring where it went, and rode to the end of the line. It was spitting snow, and in the deepening dusk I felt as bleak as the alien neighborhood I found myself in.

Spotting a Waitress Wanted sign in the dingy window of an all-night restaurant, I entered feeling as if I'd been handed a reprieve. I had worked as a waitress. The hard-eyed dame behind the counter snappishly told me I wouldn't do and, let down, I headed for a table in the corner, planning to sit out the night nursing an occasional cup of coffee with the last of my money, and in the morning look for work and a place to sleep.

Several men seated at the counter immediately began behaving like frisky colts. Swiveling on the stools, shadowboxing, laughing uproariously, all the while casting oblique glances at me. A double-B girl—big-breasted and broad-beamed—I was used to that reaction.

The woman came over and glowered at me as if I were polluting the atmosphere. "What'll you have?"

"Coffee, please."

"That all?" she sniffed.

The door opened and the men's attention shifted to the bull-chested man who entered, brushing snow from his wavy black

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hair. " 'Ey, Mereno!" "Que tal, amigo?" "Mer-*ren*-no!"

Flashing white teeth, Mereno swaggered toward them, his glance sweeping sidewise over my hair. The woman brought my coffee, set it down hard, her manner daring me to protest as liquid sloshed over the saucer onto the table.

In two strides Mereno was at the table, exuding charm, and asked her to bring me a fresh cup. Sliding into the chair opposite, he told me that Mereno was his last name, and since his boxing days he preferred it alone—his given names were unpronounceable anyway. I was almost mesmerized by his gorgeous black eyes.

Merena was his mother's maiden name, I learned. His father had run off when he was ten and he'd beat up any kid who dared call him by his father's name. Remembering my own suffering at eleven, I felt a kinship with that anguished ten-year-old boy.

"Broke?" Mereno asked sympathetically. He lit a cigarette and said softly, "You can stay at my place."

"No, thanks," I said sharply, thinking of my vow.

He took a couple of puffs, eyeing me thoughtfully. "Don' worry. I won' lay a hand on you."

My head went down and I wept as I hadn't wept since the early weeks at college, when I was so lonely and homesick that I cried myself to sleep every night, only then understanding why Ethalyn had turned away instead of bidding me goodbye the day I left home. I never saw Ethalyn cry. But many a night from my bed I heard the sound of her rocker in the kitchen as she nursed her wounded spirit.

Grateful for the haven Mereno offered me, I cleaned up his two-room dump—washed the dirty walls, scrubbed the kitchen linoleum till its pattern emerged, hand-stitched a curtain for the window I am now gazing out of. And recall with regret that I forgot my vow and melted into Mereno's arms the night he urged, black eyes glowing with warmth, "Stay, querida. But not like before."

It didn't take long to learn of Mereno's mercurial shifts of temper, his quirky humor, his vanity and possessiveness. I couldn't go anywhere without him. But withal, he was a tender lover. When I began talking of marriage, he shrugged it off. I'd stayed without it, so what was the big deal? I mentioned it once too often and that was the first time I felt his fist. After that tenderness went down for a count of ten . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brooding, I turn from the window as Mereno snaps open another beer can. The room has grown strangely shadowy for midday. Beside Mereno, Justina chews contentedly, food her passion since she has no man.

Mereno removes a crushed cigarette package from a pants pocket and digs out his last cigarette. Scowling, he searches his pockets, then growls, "Hey! Gimme a match!" Shouts, "D'ja hear? A match!"

Collecting myself, I pick up a matchbook lying on the stove and toss it to him, and watch as he lights the cigarette, one liquid black orb shut against the spiraling smoke.

Justina takes a walloping bite of her sandwich, runs a crimson feline tongue over her lips to trap every crumb, and plants a pudgy hand on Mereno's arm. I can see the food churning in her mouth as she says, "Mamacita needs—uh—money. The rent—you know?"

I brace myself for an outburst. Mereno is sure to blow his top. This is the third time in as many weeks that Mamacita is asking for rent money. For rent she pays once a month.

It is a measure of Mamacita's shrewdness that she sends Justina to do her dirty work. I have a suspicion the old dame plans to plead ignorance, should Mereno catch on, and throw the blame on Justina. Mereno is pretty sharp, but his filial loyalty has helped create a blind spot where his mother is concerned.

I don't know what Mereno does for a living. He's refused to tell me. Because of his irregular hours I have a hunch it's gambling. And, too, he's either flush or flat.

Mereno drains the can of beer and tosses the can into a pail of empties with a clatter. Taking a deep drag of his cigarette he exhales smoke into Justina's face, ignoring her sputtering cough. He flicks at her hand resting on his arm as at an annoying insect, his expression so reminiscent of the black look I'd get from my father if I so much as chattered at the table.

Only once did I receive anything like an approving look from my father and, despite my constant yearning, it would have been better if I hadn't. That was the day I found a snapshot of a lovely blonde girl and Ethalyn told me it was a picture of my mother who had died when I was a baby.

From babyhood I'd grown up believing Ethalyn to be my mother, and at age eleven was suddenly rendered motherless. Though Ethalyn asked me to forgive her for not telling me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sooner—she'd thought of me as *her* baby—I felt betrayed, that I'd been living a lie. And betrayed, I became the betrayer.

At supper I couldn't eat and when Ethalyn said, "Alison, dear, don't play with your food," I burst out, "Don't *you* tell me what to do!" I'd never spoken to her like that before. My father glanced up and I shrank back in my chair, expecting the usual look.

Instead, I caught a glint of amusement in his eyes and, exhilaratedly courting his approval, I spat at Ethalyn, "You have no right! You're not my *mother*!"

Ethalyn sat unmoving, frozen in her chair, her plain face pinched . . . aging. That night, waking from a fitful sleep, I heard her rocker in the kitchen and pulled the blankets over my head to shut out the sound . . .

"Ahwison!" Justina calls, giggling. "The coffee."

I stare down at the coffee perking like mad, and seeing, yet unseeing, wonder: Is Ethalyn lighting candles for me in church, praying the glow will illumine my way home? How I wish she knew how sorry I was for the grief I'd caused her, for the years of silence.

She was the only one who ever really loved me. When she so patiently brushed my hair each morning before school, when she stayed up late sewing pretty dresses for me, wearing dowdy ones herself, when she stood between me and my father and received blows meant for me. But fixated on my father, I spent my life pursuing what was denied me . . .

"The coffee!" Mereno yells.

I glance about bewildered. *Why is my father sitting in his undershirt at the table? Why isn't he out in the fields?*

"Dammit, are you blind?" Mereno roars. There is a hissing sound as the pot boils over. Mechanically I lift the pot, wait for the boiling to subside, then pour out a cup of coffee and bring it to the table. Mereno gives me a dark look "What the hell is the matter with you?"

He removes a wad of bills from his pants pocket and begins to count, peeling bills off one by one and dropping them on the table where they mound like falling leaves.

"Mereno?" I clear my throat anxiously. "I want—to go—home. To see my mother." I will need money from him to make the trip.

He stares at me suspiciously. "You tol' me your mother was dead."

"My stepmother. Ethalyn."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sure, querida." His sudden grin has a touch of malevolence in it, like a cunning conspirator's. "But I go with you."

I think of the one empty room at home. My father would never stand for my sharing it with Mereno. There would most certainly be a brawl. I couldn't do that to Ethalyn.

"Never mind," I tell Mereno, my voice breaking. Someday, I promise myself, I will go home.

Mereno shoves the mound of bills toward Justina. Murmuring "Gracias," she sweeps them into her bag, the coffee untouched, and heads for the door. In almost the same breath as her hasta la vista, she sings out, "Ahwison? Mamacita wants to know why you don' come see her?"

Sly Justina. El toro is becalmed and she waves the red cape. A wary eye on Mereno, I begin clearing the table. Teetering on the hind legs of his chair, he snaps open his last can of beer. "Whensa las' time you visit Mamacita?"

"Oh?" I shrug tensely, force myself to concentrate. "Three, maybe four weeks." At our very first meeting Mamacita pointed a plump finger at me and commanded, "You come see me ever' week. Eh?" She hadn't set foot in Mereno's dump for nearly a year, but hearing from Justina that his new blonde had cleaned the place she came to check, her practised eye inspecting everything, including me. Eager for acceptance, I'd promised to visit her.

Mereno takes a swig of beer. "Why so long?" I drain Justina's cup into the sink before answering.

"She accuses me of fooling you, says I bleach my hair." What I can't tell him is that Mamacita has taken to taunting me that her son will never marry me.

"Big deal." A flash of white teeth. "Go visit her." He wipes a bare arm across his grinning mouth. "No one can fool me. I know your hair is natural."

"Ole."

His eyes narrow. "You go."

"No—I won't." Shaking my head, I shut off the tap and reach for a dish towel.

"Dammit!" Mereno slams the can of beer on the table and leaps from his chair. "I say you go, you go!"

"I'm never going there again! And if *you're* as smart as you think, you won't go either." Tossing the towel on the drainboard, I turn from the sink. "Don't you realize Mamacita is taking you?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rent money every week. Hah!" An inner voice cautions restraint, yet I can't seem to help myself, as if I am beyond the point of no return.

"You want to be made a fool of?" my voice rises. "Go right ahead, amigo. After all, she's *your* mother—*oh*!" I reel back against the sink, holding my cheek. Blood oozes through my fingers. I quail before the vision of Mereno's face, black as fury.

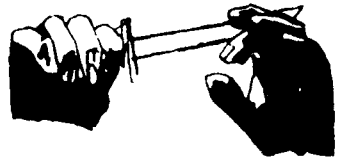
Trembling, I reach behind me for the bread knife on the drainboard, with a vague notion that my brandishing the knife will force Mereno to give ground and allow me to escape from him.

With a lunge Mereno snaps the knife from my hand, sends it skittering across the linoleum. I drop onto all fours and scrabble after it. Clutching the knife in my fist, I remain crouched on the floor, puzzled by the change in the light. The room is dim now, as though a dense fog has rolled in.

Revolving on my heel, I half rise. Through a haze I glimpse Mereno, his face blurred out of focus, floating toward me in a strange slow-motion movement. I float upward to meet him, feel the knife make contact with his body, watch dreamily as he crumples slowly to the floor.

In the enveloping darkness I hear a woman's voice keening—the sound of a rocker—

Ethalyn, don't weep. We are safe now, you and I. See, my father lies there on the floor. He will never be able to hurt us again. Never . . . Mother . . .



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF SECOND STORIES

Our prediction that a second story by Dorothy Benjamin would reach our desk soon has come true. Her second story arrived even before we could publish her first, and as has happened in EQMM in the past (in this issue, in fact), we are publishing a new writer's first two stories back to back.

And as promised, here is more about the author: now that she is a grandmother, Mrs. Benjamin considers writing her main interest. She describes it as "hard work, demanding, rewarding, challenging, and mind-expanding . . . while I'm 'creating,' all pressures and worries fade."

Other new writers, young and old, take heart!

THE SHREW

by DOROTHY BENJAMIN

Until I was 14 my Aunt Shirley was, in effect, my guardian. A graceless hulk of a woman with beady coal-black eyes and a domineering manner, she alienated every schoolmate I brought home, so that I came into adolescence without a friend among my peers.

When I expressed the desire for a dog, for companionship, Aunt Shirley snapped, "Absolutely not!" and the nostrils of her beaked nose flared with indignation. Have a dirty animal messing up *her* house?

What a contrast my Aunt Emily was! The opposite of her older sister, Emily was small and delicate, her large brown eyes, tawny hair, and gentle demeanor reminding me of the golden-hued chipmunks that roamed our grounds that year. She was soft-spoken, as was my father who also resided with my two aunts. A mild-mannered man, Pop had a habit of fingering his mustache when nervous, which was almost constantly when Aunt Shirley was present.

Though Aunt Shirley planned the meals, it was Aunt Emily

© 1976 by Dorothy Benjamin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who did the cooking and baking and she'd sneak nutmeats to me for the chipmunks whenever she baked a nutcake. In my loneliness I centered my attention on the chipmunks. But Aunt Shirley hated those cute little animals and threatened to get some poison, from the small farm across the road, to use on them.

"The chipmunks aren't hurting anyone," I protested the last time she voiced her threat.

"They're digging holes in *my* lawn, aren't they?" she rasped. *Her* lawn. I was the one who mowed and raked and weeded it, as in the winter I was the one who cleared the walks of snow and shoveled coal into the furnace.

I could see the bristly little hairs sprouting on Aunt Shirley's chin as she brought her face close to mine. "If I catch you feeding those critters, you'll go without supper for a week. You understand me, Junior?"

"Yes'm," I muttered, not at all pleased by the prospect of missing meals. At 14 I was growing like a weed and was always hungry. Aunt Emily would slip me an occasional apple or slice of cake, but it wasn't nearly enough to satisfy my constant hunger. Aunt Shirley didn't approve of snacks between meals, so by suppertime I'd feel as if there was a gnawing hole inside me.

Not that supper was anything but meager. For years Aunt Shirley used the Depression as an excuse for our skimpy meals, but by then the Great Depression was over. In any event, we could have afforded to eat better. My grandfather, a noted judge of the county, had left an annuity for his two daughters and, besides, there were Pop's weekly wages from the town's hardware store where he worked.

I hated the way Aunt Shirley would rake Pop over the coals if any money was missing from his pay envelope. From what I'd heard, when my mother died at my birth Aunt Shirley informed Pop that it was her duty to raise her dead sister's infant and, under the stress of grief, Pop consented to turn over his salary to her. All he ever bought for himself were cheap cigars.

Which he was forced to smoke out of doors because *she* wasn't going to have smelly cigars stink up *her* house. I noticed, though, that when Sheriff Whiteside came to dine there was nary a complaint from Aunt Shirley when he lit up after the meal. A past crony of the judge's, the middle-aged bachelor Sheriff was sweet on Aunt Emily, but Aunt Shirley saw to it they never had the chance to spend a moment alone.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I enjoyed the times Sheriff Whiteside had supper with us. Partly because I got more to eat then—plus the fact he was the only company we ever entertained—and partly because of his dog, a friendly red setter named Rex.

Rex would be more piqued by the sight of a chipmunk than he ever was by a cat. He'd give immediate chase and howl his frustration when the chipmunk disappeared into a hole. Whenever the sheriff visited I spent as much time outside with Rex as I could. I loved that dog.

At the table the sheriff would regale us with tales of his "cases," a few of which, I suspect, were embellished for effect as there was little crime in our small town, and that mainly of the innocuous variety. At least there wasn't anything of major import until Aunt Shirley's murder, in midsummer, as we were preparing to leave for our annual vacation at a small lake up-country.

On Aunt Shirley's orders the house had to be cleaned from top to bottom before we left. The shabby antiquated furniture the judge had purchased heaven knew how many years before for his bride had to be brushed thoroughly, then covered with dust sheets. You'd think the County Historical Society was going to inspect the premises while we were gone.

Aunt Shirley was a great one for giving orders. With a bandanna tied over her lank black hair, she'd stride about supervising, never doing any of the actual work herself. Knowing the burden would fall on Aunt Emily, I offered to clean the windows for her. Overhearing, Aunt Shirley bellowed, "Never mind the windows! You go sweep out the cellar!"

I pointed out that Aunt Emily would need to use a ladder but that I could reach the tops of the windows easy. I was nearly as tall as Aunt Shirley then.

Aunt Shirley's thick black brows came together over her beaked nose and they looked like a bird in flight. "Don't you argue with *me,* young man! You'll do as you're told! And right now!"

"Junior," Aunt Emily whispered anxiously, "please listen to your aunt." Intimidated by Aunt Shirley, neither she nor Pop would stand up for themselves. And they were so fearful of incurring Aunt Shirley's wrath that they wouldn't allow me to defend them. Not wanting to distress Aunt Emily, I went down to the cellar.

Sweeping out the coal bin, I grumbled to myself: What was the sense when a load of coal would be delivered the next morning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before we left? Aunt Shirley had ordered the delivery because the summer price was cheaper. And who wanted to go up-country, anyway? The cottage Aunt Shirley rented was so far from the lake—cheaper that way—I'd be lucky if I went swimming at all.

But I knew I would go, if for no other reason than to keep from upsetting Pop and Aunt Emily. I comforted myself with the thought that at least I'd have new reading material to help pass the time. I'd withdrawn three books on nature from the County Library to take along.

After supper I sat at the kitchen table skimming through one of the books when Aunt Shirley's harsh voice caught my attention. "You call this clean?" There was a sharp protesting squeak as her finger streaked across a kitchen pane.

" 'I washed it,' " Aunt Shirley mimicked Aunt Emily's little-girl voice. "Well, do it over! I am not leaving my house with dirty windows!" To Aunt Shirley it was always *my* house, though the judge had left his property equally to both his unmarried daughters.

"Shrew," I muttered under my breath, with greater sibilant intensity than I had intended. There was a sudden hush in the kitchen, broken by Aunt Shirley's voice grating, *"What did you say?"*

The scene took on the aspect of a tableau. In my peripheral vision I noted Aunt Emily's hand, holding a cloth, stiffen, and Pop, about to dispose of accumulated trash, stood as if mesmerized.

I glanced up at Aunt Shirley innocently. "It says here in this nature book that when shrews move into an area, the chipmunks tend to disappear."

I went on to read—in as normal a tone as I could muster with Aunt Shirley standing over me, her beady eyes glaring—that the shrew was a nocturnal mammal related to the mole, had very small eyes and a long pointed snout. No specific information was given as to what the shrews actually did, but it became fixed in my mind that in some fashion they preyed on the chipmunks, the gentle creatures too timid to protect themselves.

"Let me see that!" Aunt Shirley tore the book from my grasp, stood reading in an undertone. "Well!" she snorted, slamming the book down on the oilcloth-covered table, "*I'm* for the shrews." Turning, she snarled, "What're you standing around for!"—and Pop and Aunt Emily sprang into action.

After breakfast the next morning Aunt Shirley ordered us to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

take the two suitcases to the railroad depot and wait for her there. Her beady eyes glittered as she told us she would join us after the coal came. She enjoyed issuing orders at any time, but this time I assumed it was a way of working off her frustration because the coal was supposed to have been delivered the first thing in the morning. There was no reason for us to go on ahead. If Aunt Shirley wasn't such a miser we'd have had a telephone and she could have called the coal company to find out why there had been a delay.

As I reached for the larger of the cases, Aunt Shirley snorted, "That all your lazy no-account father is going to carry—the itty bitty case?"

I turned angrily to answer her but was restrained by Pop's hand on my arm. Aunt Emily surprised me then by saying, "That's not fair, Shirley," her childlike voice mildly reproving. "You know Daniel hurt his back down at the hardware store."

"And *since when, pray tell, do I need an idiot like you to inform me* what is fair?" Aunt Shirley snapped. "You dimwit, you!"

Aunt Emily looked crushed. Pop stood fingering his mustache, wanting, I'm sure, to come to her defense, but he was held back by his fear of Aunt Shirley. He'd often apologized to me for being unable to assist with the chores, especially with the furnace in winter. I didn't mind. Shoveling coal had helped develop my muscles.

Shouldering the cases, I stomped out after Pop and Aunt Emily. Single file, we trod the graveled path to Main Street, Aunt Shirley's shadow hanging over us like a pall. It hurt to see Aunt Emily dabbing at her eyes and Pop walking hunched over as though weighted down by an intolerable burden. It occurred to me that these two gentle people I loved would never be able to draw an easy breath so long as Aunt Shirley lived. She was as much a menace to them as she was to the chipmunks.

And then it hit me—why Aunt Shirley wanted us out of the way. Her glittering eyes! She was going to make good her threat to get rid of the chipmunks! She had been filled with secret glee over her scheme to confront us with the accomplished deed when we returned from the lake.

This, on top of the other, was too much. A cold fury possessed me. We'd all be better off with Aunt Shirley dead—Pop, Aunt Emily, the chipmunks, and me too. And that is when I decided to do something about it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I called to Pop, told him I had forgotten the book I'd planned to read on the train and was returning to the house for it, and would meet him and Aunt Emily at the depot later. Then, stashing the cases under a shrub so I could move fast, I took a short cut home through an overgrown field, half formulating a plan as I went, and praying all the while the coal hadn't been delivered yet.

Coming into our yard I glanced through the open cellar window and heaved a sigh of relief. The bin was empty. A chipmunk, foraging for food in a corner of the yard, stood and folded its paws across its buffy white chest.

"Thanks, fella," I said softly. My plan depended on somehow luring Aunt Shirley into the cellar and the sight of the chipmunk had given me an idea. It seemed fitting that the little animal should contribute to its own survival.

Aunt Shirley was nowhere in the house. I stepped onto the front porch, looked up the street and saw her emerge from the farm across the road, carrying what was obviously a container of poison. She wore her perennially resurrected summer hat, a hideous combination of black straw and blood-red roses that, if anything, accentuated her beaked nose.

Quickly, before she could spot me, I went inside and hurried down to the cellar. Taking the shovel, I propped it against the wall of the coal bin and waited expectantly. When I heard the sound of her familiar heavy tread, I shouted up the cellar stairs, "Aunt Shirley?"

She came to the door and squawked, "Junior! What're you doing down there?"

My voice quavered as I said the one thing I knew would bring her running: "There's a chipmunk in the cellar."

"A *chipmunk*!" The cellar steps creaked under her weight as she came down as fast as her bulk would allow. "*Where?*" Her beady eyes darted about, glaring.

I pointed to the coal bin, my heart thumping so loudly as she passed in front of me that I was afraid she'd hear it. Raising the shovel, I swung it with all my might against the back of her head. She dropped without a sound.

Then I heard the coal truck drive up and within moments a chute was thrust through the open window, followed by a rush of coal. I stood in the shadows, listening to the coal clattering down the chute and burying Aunt Shirley, the container of poison, and her monstrous hat. . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The few days I spent at the lake remain my most pleasant memory. Without Aunt Shirley's intimidating presence Pop and Aunt Emily visibly relaxed. We took our meals outdoors on the screened porch, something Aunt Shirley had never allowed. And we arranged with the proprietor of the general store for his son to drive us to the lake every afternoon in his pickup truck.

In the evening we'd go for a stroll, delighting in the clear, pine-scented air. Pop would offer his arm to Aunt Emily with a gallant flourish and she, giggling, would accept it with a flirtatious toss of her head. They were like the chipmunks, I thought, sweet, gentle—even to their newfound friskiness. And I was glad, then, that there was no Aunt Shirley the shrew to prey on them.

How I wish I could have stayed longer at the lake, to draw out those last pleasant days. But Aunt Emily became troubled over Aunt Shirley's failure to appear and decided we must return home because Aunt Shirley might be ill. It was obvious, though, that Aunt Emily was reluctant to go back, to face the daily terror of Aunt Shirley.

"You and Pop stay," I urged. "I'll go."

I wanted to protect them as long as possible from the furor that was bound to arise when Aunt Shirley would have to be reported missing. Encouraged by Pop, Aunt Emily agreed, after exacting my promise to telephone the general store the morning after my return, to let her know what had delayed Aunt Shirley. I kept wondering what I'd tell her when I called.

To some extent my leaving proved to be a happy circumstance. In the short time they were alone Pop and Aunt Emily came to an understanding and at summer's end they were quietly married, their happiness tempered only by their concern for me.

You see, it was Sheriff Whiteside who telephoned the general store.

When I got off the train and saw Sheriff Whiteside standing there with Rex at his side, my heart did a flip-flop. Rex bounded up to me and while caressing his head I managed to regain my calm.

In a small town like ours the townspeople, including the sheriff, often visited the depot just to see who was arriving or departing. I felt confident that the sheriff's presence posed no threat to me. Aunt Shirley lay safely buried under the load of coal.

Nodding hello, the sheriff fell into step and accompanied me up

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Main Street. "Hot, isn't it?" He mopped his brow. Though it was near twilight, the heat was oppressive. I noticed that didn't prevent the sheriff from smoking a cigar.

"Had a bit of a to-do," he said. "A tramp passing through broke into a couple of empty houses last night. I remembered your family was away on vacation and thought I'd better check out your house. It was okay. Locked tight as a drum." He glanced at me sidewise. "As I was leaving, a chipmunk ran into a window well, and you know Rex. He bounced right in after it."

I laughed. "Just like Rex."

"Yeah, just like Rex." The sheriff looked grim. "The window gave way under Rex's weight and he tumbled into the cellar. I forced open the back door and called and called to him, but he wouldn't come up. I had to go in after him." The sheriff came to a halt. We had reached his office. "Found Rex in the coal bin," he said softly.

The cigar clamped between his teeth, the sheriff unlocked the door and motioned for me to precede him inside. Swallowing hard, I entered the office and sat down on the solitary chair. Sheriff Whiteside propped himself against a corner of his desk.

Excited to find me on his home grounds, Rex leaped at me and his master snapped, "Get away from him!" As the setter slunk away, the sheriff muttered, "Pesky critter." I'd never known him to treat Rex like that before.

"Well," the sheriff said. "Rex was barking and scratching at the coal like mad. I figured he'd sniffed out a dead mouse or a dead chipmunk, and that's why he was making such a racket. I took the shovel and began shoveling the coal."

The sheriff paused and gazed at his cigar as if it had gone sour. Stubbing it out in an ashtray on his desk, he sighed heavily.

"Your Aunt Shirley sure was a mighty harsh woman. Wasn't she, Junior?"

She sure was—a shrew who preyed on chipmunks. But I couldn't find my voice to tell him so.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* crime story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Jefferson Mason had a score to settle after seven long years of prison food and hard labor. In his mind he had an IOU for one life, and nothing would prevent him from collecting—with interest. . .

IOU ONE LIFE

by *WILLIAM BANKIER*

Seven years of Alabama prison food and hard work in the fields had absorbed every ounce of fat from Jefferson Mason's body. The dirty raincoat hung on his lean frame as he stood inside the telephone booth watching Eddie Bryan's house. He would know in a couple of minutes if his phone call had worked. It should have; he had appealed to Eddie's vanity and greed.

It was hot inside the booth but Mason could not unbutton the coat. If he did, the sticks of dynamite taped to the lining might show, and so would the wires that connected with the detonators and threaded down his sleeve to the switch he was holding in his right-hand pocket. If Eddie left and Mason was able to get into the house, then he would open the coat. There was an air conditioner visible in the front window, so it would be cool inside.

An automobile appeared in the driveway, backed into the street, turned and gunned away down the road between the quiet houses. That was good old Eddie—glittering chrome, a fat tanned face, a big cigar jutting out of his jaw. Well, Jefferson Mason had 30 "cigars" inside his coat. And he was about to turn that smug face of Eddie's white. Forever.

He left the phone booth and limped across the street to the big house set back behind a wide lawn with small Chinese elms trimmed to the shape of leafy balls lining the walk. He stood at the door and rang the bell. A pretty woman, blonde and a trifle plump in jeans and white blouse, opened the door. Her eyes flick-

© *1976 by William Bankier.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ered over the scrawny man in his dirty raincoat on a bright sunny day. The thought "derelict" entered her mind. And the thought, "panhandler."

"Mrs. Bryan?"

"Yes?"

"We spoke on the phone a few minutes ago. I'm Jefferson Mason."

She frowned, then smiled. "Oh, yes. But hasn't there been a mistake? Eddie said there was a producer you wanted him to see and he just went to meet you."

"No. No mistake. May I come in?" He smiled at her and there was the echo of an appealing man behind the grim unshaven face.

"I'm sorry, please come inside. Eddie's told me all about you."

"Not all, surely." He stepped into the cool hallway, followed her into a living room fitted with low heavy furniture. He saw acres of carpet littered with blocks, picture books, and dolls, and among them a little girl in overalls. She was blonde, too, with large eyes, perfect and vacant like the eyes of her dolls.

"I've been following Eddie's career in the pop-music magazines," Mason said. "I never knew he had a daughter."

"Alison is mine. From before I knew Eddie."

"That's good. That's even better."

"Pardon me?" Susan Bryan felt a chilly ripple of instinctive fear. She went and stood by Alison.

Mason unbuttoned his coat. He opened it with one hand and showed her the dynamite. It was a preposterous demonstration, like the vaudeville comic offering his stock of hot watches to the straight man. "It means when I blow up this house, I don't just get Eddie's wife, I get his adopted daughter too. Eddie owes me a life. The little girl can be the seven years' interest."

The woman stared at the fat tubes in the coat almost as if she were witnessing some erotic display. He could have been a flasher in the park. Then her eyes clicked back into focus and she stepped to the telephone. "You'd better get going. We have a very good police force."

"Don't touch that phone." He took his right hand from his pocket and showed her the switch. "All I have to do is press this and there won't be much of this house left."

She left the telephone, took Alison's hand, and drew the girl to her as she sank onto a chair. "I don't understand. You're supposed to be Eddie's friend."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You said he told you all about me."

"Only that he met you when he was touring down south. You were a radio announcer in Birmingham and you became his press agent."

"That's right. I helped Eddie when he needed all the help he could get. He's a good pop singer but not in the country style. They know the difference down there. Still, I was able to get him in the right clubs and to the right reporters and DJs. They all knew Jefferson Mason." His eyes were somewhere else; one last poignant look back into the years when it was mostly good times and he was somebody.

Susan saw the change in him, the momentary absence of madness. She knew she had to keep him in this mood. "Eddie said you two had a lot of fun together."

"For a while we had nothing but fun. We met in a bar in Nashville—I was between radio stations at the time. Did Eddie tell you I used to be a pretty fair alcoholic? It's true. I don't blame Eddie for my radio career falling apart. Booze did that. No, Eddie owes me for something else."

The little girl left her mother's side and walked to the chair where Mason was perched, angular and tense.

"Alison!"

"Don't worry, Mrs. Bryan. She's no safer over there with you than she is beside me. When this house goes, everything goes." But he said this vacantly, his mind not on destruction, his mind still in the past. His free hand, the left one, traced a line down the part in Alison's hair. "I remember that first night Eddie and I got drunk together. Dancing in the aisle with the waitress. A small fist fight outside with a taxi driver. Wandering in an alley, falling over garbage cans. You lie beside a man on a dirty pavement and look up at the stars and laugh and it does something. It brings you close."

"He told me it was like that."

"Yeah. So there we went, drifting through the south like Tom and Huck on a raft. We had our second-hand Lincoln Continental, and our sour-mash bourbon, and always that dream of the Grand Ol' Opry around the next bend in the river. Just me and Eddie—and Mary Jo." Mason's gray head lifted and swiveled. "Did Eddie mention Mary Jo?"

"No. I didn't realize there was a girl."

"Oh, there was a girl all right. With Eddie there's always a girl.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But in this case she was *my* girl. Mary Jo was with me in the beginning. And I was with her at the end."

Susan Bryan was not so afraid of Mason now. He did not seem as old; the gray hair, the haggard features were a loose disguise on a man not very far from her own generation. And he no longer seemed dangerous. She meant it when she said, "I'd like to know more about Mary Jo."

Mason said, "She used to hang around the studio in Birmingham and bring me coffee. She was too young to bring me whiskey. After a while she started helping me with the program—sorting requests, getting records from the library. She became my assistant and we started spending all our time together. She was with me in Nashville when I met Eddie and she came along on the tour. But after a few weeks the relationships began to change."

Alison was reaching with awkward fingers for the switch in Mason's hand. He drew it away, his concentration disturbed. Susan prompted him. "How did things change?"

"We'd be in a bar and Eddie would dance with Mary Jo. I was never a good dancer. When they came back to the table, there was something in the air, something between them. And after a while the balance shifted. Nobody said anything, but the three of us knew the world had slipped a notch. Mary Jo was Eddie's girl now. And I was their friend."

"I'm sorry."

"No reason to be. Not yet. They were so happy together, it made me happy. And Mary Jo was still kind to me. The game wasn't over." Mason held up the switch and looked at it. His eyes hardened. "Then it happened."

"What happened?"

"I came back to the hotel one night and found Eddie and Mary Jo in my room. She was unconscious. An overdose. Maybe it was the combination of drugs and liquor. Anyway, she was in bad shape. I called an ambulance and while we were waiting, Eddie asked me to get him off the hook. He said it would damage his career if word got out he was feeding H to an underage girl. He was right of course; he could have kissed Nashville goodbye. So he asked me to take the rap for him, if there was to be a rap. While he disappeared to his own room."

Susan heard the heavy tread of inevitability. "And you agreed?"

"Why not? All I cared about was Mary Jo. And I was in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambulance holding her hand when she died. After that nothing mattered much. I hardly remember the trial. Eddie came to see me in jail and said not to worry, he had the cash to pay a big-shot lawyer who'd get me off with a short sentence. But then Eddie disappeared. When I came out of the fog, I was in Alabama State Prison serving seven years."

The telephone rang, breaking the mood of reminiscence. Mason's hand came up, thumb poised over the switch. "Be careful what you say!"

Susan picked up the phone. It was Eddie, angry at the end of a wild goose chase. Mason took over. "Glad you called, Eddie. Now I can tell you what I'm going to do to your family. I've got thirty sticks of dynamite on me and a switch to set them off. No, I'm not kidding. Your wife will tell you if I'm kidding."

Susan took the phone and said, "It's true. The dynamite is in his coat. I've seen it. Oh, God, Eddie, I'm afraid—"

While the grownups were occupied, Alison had drifted out of the room, through the kitchen, and out of the house by the back door. Mason took back the telephone.

"It's the day of reckoning, Eddie. You took Mary Jo from me, and because of you the State of Alabama took seven years out of my life. Now I'm going to take your wife and daughter. No, don't call the police. The first sign of a cop in the street, this whole place goes up."

When he put down the telephone, Susan Bryan said bitterly, "I can see you have a reason. Eddie treated you badly. But it's wrong of you to torture us like this."

"Then I'll end the torture right now." He held the switch with both hands, adjusting his grip, placing his thumb on the toggle.

Susan looked around wildly. "Alison!"

"Where's the girl?" Mason raised his voice, sounding as if he had been robbed. "I want that girl."

They ran from room to room, looking for Alison. Mason chased Susan through the kitchen, through the dining room and up the stairs, his old coat flapping. It was bizarre, almost slapstick—the woman crying, the scarecrow man breathing heavily through his mouth.

Finally Susan said, "I know what's happened. She always visits our neighbor in the morning. She's at Connie Armstrong's."

Mason said, "I want her here. She's important now."

"At least you won't be able to kill her." Susan was defiant. She

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

walked downstairs and into the living room, turning her back on his terrible threat. "I don't care what happens to me."

In Connie Armstrong's kitchen Alison stood with her eyes at table level, running her hand over the newspaper unfolded there.

Connie said, "I thought you weren't coming this morning. Come on, sit on my lap and I'll read you something. I don't have a story book, so we'll make do with the news. If I can find anything suitable—it's all bombings and kidnapings and other assorted disasters. What a world!"

She turned a page and Alison closed her eyes, smiling into the momentary breeze. "Here's a story about a rich old lady marrying a handsome young man. See their picture? Aren't they a lovely couple?" And Connie Armstrong began to read aloud.

Jefferson Mason was sitting now in the Bryan kitchen watching Susan move around the counter. He was not aware of her tense look as she rattled coffee cups, spilled instant coffee from a trembling spoon, waiting for the kettle to boil. His mind was on the absent child.

"There's something the matter with your little girl, isn't there?"

"She's retarded. She can't say very much, but she can do a few more things every year. I've worked hard with her."

"I'm surprised at Eddie. It isn't like him to adopt an imperfect child."

Susan made no attempt to hide her bitterness. "It wasn't his idea. He had no choice—she came with me. Even now he wants her out of here and into an institution, but I won't have that." A point of persuasion occurred to her. "It's no use your trying to hurt Eddie by killing Alison. You'd be doing him a favor."

"Would I?"

"It's a fact. She isn't part of his image. The successful Eddie Bryan, everything pure gold. That's why you haven't read about her in the pop magazines. He doesn't admit she even exists."

"That sounds like Eddie." Mason nodded. "But I want her here."

Susan carried a brimming cup of steaming coffee to the table, balancing it on a saucer. "Here you are. It's hot."

He reached for the cup and she tipped it deliberately. Scalding coffee spilled on his wrist. Instinctively he dropped the switch, using both hands in an attempt to straighten the cup. Susan tried to grab the switch but he was too fast for her, bodying her out of the way, kicking fragments of the smashed cup and saucer across the tile floor. Then he was back in control, the switch in his right

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, his scalded left wrist dangling. He swung it from side to side, tears in his eyes, hissing with pain.

Susan said, "I'm sorry, I didn't want to hurt you. I was trying to stop all this."

"A little pain for a little while," Mason said. "I'll live." He laughed at the irony.

Susan went to a cupboard, found salve and a roll of bandage, and brought it to him. "Let me put this on it."

"Watch it," he said, tensing his thumb over the switch, but he let her apply the medication and wrap the burn in gauze.

She was just finished when they heard the front door close and a moment later Eddie Bryan appeared in the kitchen doorway. Mason stood up and put his back to a wall. "Stay back, Eddie."

Susan ran to her husband. "Talk to him, Eddie. He's told me why he wants revenge. Tell him you'll make it up to him."

"Okay, cool down. We can settle this, that's why I'm here." Bryan turned to Mason, arms spread expansively, a gleaming smile in the suntanned face. "Hey, old buddy, I don't believe this scene."

"You'd better believe it."

"Know what you and I have to do, Jefferson? Go down to a bar and put away about ten pints each, like the old days. Remember?"

"I remember more than you do."

"Then I'll let you take me out in the alley and beat my ears off. I can't say fairer than that, can I?" He made a move toward Mason who raised his right hand.

"Stay back, Eddie. I mean it." The kitchen door opened as Alison came in, then the door banged behind her. Susan knelt and swept the child into her arms.

Mason said, "That's all I was waiting for. Now I need just one thing, Eddie. I want you out of here." He blinked at Susan and the child, then looked away. "That's how it has to be. You pay me their lives and you go on living without them."

"You're crazy," Eddie said. "There's no way I'll walk out on my wife."

"Really? I know you better than you know yourself." Mason glanced at the kitchen clock. "I'll give you ten minutes."

"You're out of your mind!"

"Ten minutes, Eddie. And counting."

Eddie Bryan sat down at the kitchen table. He spread his hands and looked at the palms, turned them over and inspected the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

backs of them. His mind was racing. "Thomas Jefferson Mason," he said, "you listen to me. You've shaken us up here, scared hell out of me and my wife, and I guess I brought that on us. I deserve worse. But I don't deserve to die, none of us do. What happened to Mary Jo was an accident and you serving time was wrong, but it's all in the past. I can't do anything about that."

"Shut up. You make me sick."

"But there's a lot I can do. I've got promotions coming up, plans for pop albums, for tours and concerts. I need a manager and you're the best, Jeff. We could make a lot of bread together."

"You're a con man, Eddie. Don't try to tell me I've got a future. It's too late." Mason looked at the clock. "Time's a-wastin' if you're going to save your own skin."

Eddie hesitated. He looked at Susan, then away again. He said, "You're serious about this?"

"I don't want you dead. I want you alive. Save yourself, Eddie, the ship is sinking. Scramble off as fast as you can."

Eddie got up and went to the doorway. He took Susan's hand. "May I speak to my wife for a minute? Alone?"

Mason was bitterly amused. "I knew you'd accept my offer. Go ahead, rationalize your cowardice."

In the other room Eddie lowered his voice. There was something furtive in his eyes. "Listen, Sue, maybe I should go."

"By all means."

"I'm not deserting you. I have an idea. Stall him, keep him talking."

"I never wanted you to die, Eddie," she said. "Go, while you can."

"You're missing the point."

Mason came into the room. "I meant it about the ten minutes. I'm getting edgy."

Eddie said, "I've decided to go. We've both decided. It makes no sense for all of us to stay."

"That's right. Like it made no sense for you to get caught with Mary Jo." Mason went and stood near the front door. "Get out, Eddie. You're a beautiful person."

As Eddie Bryan walked to the door Susan said, "Wait. There's a new condition, Mr. Mason. Alison goes with him."

Mason said, "Alison stays here. I've told you."

"But you're wrong. He doesn't love her. She's a burden on him, an embarrassment. You won't hurt him by killing her. You'll just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tidy up his life. Make him go on supporting her."

"That's an interesting thought."

"If you refuse, I'll walk out the door right now. You'll have to kill all of us."

Mason made up his mind. "All right. The girl goes too."

Susan sent Alison to Eddie who took her hand, frowned hard at his wife, then went out, closing the door behind him.

When they were gone, Susan sank onto a sofa and covered her face, giving in to the tension. Mason watched her for a moment. He said, "That was a hard thing for you to do. You're a remarkable woman. Too good for him."

"Please, no more talk. If it has to happen, let it happen now."

Mason walked from the door to a place on the sofa beside her. "The thing is, I don't feel much like killing you any more. I don't know what's happened."

Susan uncovered her face and looked at him, wiping tears from her eyes. "I don't think you ever really wanted to. Anyway, why bother? You must see it wouldn't hurt Eddie much to lose me. You're quite right about him. He lives for himself."

"I can't imagine why you married him."

"Because he paid attention to me. I was with a bunch of girls in a club where he was singing. I was the quiet one and I guess that interested him. When he found out I was divorced with a child, that intrigued him too. It gave him a ready-made family without his having to invest any emotional capital. We didn't know then about Alison's condition."

"She's a sweet child. I can see why you want to keep her." Mason looked at his bandaged wrist as if he didn't remember hurting it. "If I let you go, Mrs. Bryan, what will you do?"

"I'm not sure. But I don't think I'll ever be the same."

In Connie Armstrong's house beyond the hedge, Connie was saying, "Sure, I'll keep Alison here. But what can you do alone? Shouldn't you call the police?"

"No, that might panic him. But I know Jeff Mason from away back. He's a bluffer. If he really meant to set off that bomb, he'd have done it long ago. Instead, he's in there talking. Feeling sorry for himself."

"So what's your move?"

"I've got a plan, don't worry." Eddie grinned. "Just show me where your husband keeps that old army revolver of his."

With time to think, Susan Bryan was saying, "It sounds crazy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but you may have done me a favor. Eddie and I have been drifting. We don't hate each other. We're just too deep in the rut to climb out."

"Like most people."

"But now everything's shaken up. I'll have to go."

"Go where?"

"I don't know yet. I've got some money saved. I'll take Alison, find a room somewhere, find a job—"

"You'll survive. Susan."

She looked at him. She actually smiled. "So will you. It isn't too late."

"I'm afraid it is for me."

"That's just your depression talking. You need rest, and food. And sorting out this thing in your mind."

"I feel better since telling you about it."

"That's how it works." Susan extended both her hands. Mason let go of the switch and put his hands in hers. She said, "Whatever happens, you'll keep in touch?"

Connie Armstrong was handing the gun to Eddie. "It scares me to death," she said. "I've asked him to turn it in a hundred times. Or at least to unload it."

"I'm glad he never listened," Eddie said. "Now you stay here and hold onto the kid." He got up and let himself out the kitchen door.

Susan and Jefferson Mason were standing now in the living room. Mason said, "What if Eddie decides to make trouble? If he tells the police about this, I'm back in jail forever."

"He won't. I'll tell him I'd put out the story of what he did in the south. That would be fatal to his image. Eddie won't risk his image."

As she opened the door Susan said, "I'd feel better if you'd get out of that terrible coat."

Mason took the coat off and hung it over his arm. He disconnected the wires from the switch and tucked the switch into a pocket. "Maybe now I'll buy a new coat," he said. "I used to be a sharp dresser."

"That's the spirit, Jeff."

They were on the front step when Susan saw Eddie by the wall of the house. He was standing sideways, the gun extended, his eye squinting down the sight.

"Eddie, don't!" she screamed. "He's not going to do it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mason turned and saw Eddie with the gun. "Surprise, surprise," he said.

Susan tried to drag Mason back into the house but he gave her no aid. "Don't, Eddie!" she yelled. "The bomb is disconnected."

Eddie Bryan pulled the trigger. The gun roared and a bullet slammed into Mason's chest. He sagged to the concrete step and fell forward.

Susan knelt over him. "Oh, God, Eddie, you've killed him! You heard me say he'd changed his mind."

Eddie stood over them with the gun at his side. "He terrorized us all day. He can't do that to me."

Connie Armstrong came running with Alison. "Wow, you did it, Eddie! Fantastic! You got him with one shot."

"Look after things, will you, Connie? Susan's pretty upset. I've got to make a phone call." He went into the house, leaving the front door open. They could hear him dialing the phone.

Connie's voice was full of respect. "I envy you, Susan. To have a man who loves you so much he'll kill to protect you. You're so lucky."

Susan looked up blankly at her neighbor. Mason's head was pillowed on her knees. Eddie's voice echoed from inside the house. "No, Arnie, you leave the police to me. I'll call them. What I want you to do is see that the press and TV boys hear about it. You know the angle. 'Pop singer kills in defense of wife and daughter he loves.' "

Susan Bryan stopped listening. She got up and separated Alison's hand from Connie's. Then she led her daughter down the walk and into the street, not knowing where she was going, only that she was going away from here, far away.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by
CELIA FREMLIN

Husband, wife, and wife's lover or husband, wife, and husband's mistress—the eternal, infernal triangle . . . Celia Fremlin puts it under the lens of her special microscope and examines it with her very special eyes . . . an exceptional story written by a woman who knows women—and men . . .

DANGEROUS SPORT

by CELIA FREMLIN

"Darling, I'd just love to be able to stay. You know I would. I'm just as disappointed as you are. But—"

But.

But, but, but. What would it be *this* time, Stella wondered bitterly. Whatever it was, she'd have heard it before, that was certain. After five years of going around with a married man, a girl knows his repertoire by heart.

But I have to help Wendy with the weekend shopping. *But* the man is coming to fix the hot-water boiler. *But* I have to fetch Carol from the Brownies. *But* Simon is away from school with a temperature. *But* I have to meet Aunt Esmé at the airport.

This last had been the funniest "but" of all; and though in fact it had happened quite near the beginning of her relationship with Gerald, it still made Stella laugh, and grind her teeth, when she thought about it. For it had come so soon after that golden September day when, lying in the long grass by the river outside Marlowe, Gerald had been confiding in her, as married men will, about his loneliness. Even as a child he'd been lonely, he told her.

"No brothers and sisters. Not even any uncles or aunts," he'd explained sadly. "I used to long sometimes for one of those big, close, quarrelsome families, all weddings and funerals and eating roast chicken and bread sauce at each other's tables, and running down each other's in-laws. I yearned for a group larger than just

© *1976 by Celia Fremlin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

myself and my two parents—I wanted my own tribe, and that wonderful feeling of *belonging*. Particularly at Christmas I used to feel . . ."

Stella couldn't remember, at this distance of time, what it was that Gerald used to feel at Christmas—something about tangerines, and somebody else's grandfather out in the snow sawing apple logs—or something; it was of no importance, and that's why she'd forgotten it. What *was* important was the discrepancy she'd instantly spotted between these maudlin reminiscences and the cock-and-bull story about meeting "Aunt Esmé" at the airport.

She'd given him every chance. Why couldn't *Wendy* be the one to meet the woman, she'd asked, watching him intently while she spoke. After all, she was Wendy's aunt, not his—"Oh, no, darling, no, whatever gave you that idea? She's *my* aunt. She was awfully good to me as a kid, and so I feel this is the least I can do. It's an awful bore, but—you *do* understand, don't you, darling?"

Of course she'd understood. That's what mistresses are for.

"*Of course*, darling!" she'd said, not batting an eyelid; and afterward, how she'd laughed about it—when she'd finished crying!

She had to be so very careful, that was the thing: call Gerald's bluff even once, and the whole relationship could have been wrecked forever. He had made it quite, quite clear to her, very early, that suspicion, jealousy, and possessiveness were the prerogatives of the wife, and of the wife alone. It was in the nature of things (Gerald seemed to feel) that *Wendy* should cross-examine him about his business trips, ring up the office to check that he really was working late, go through his pockets for letters and for incriminating theater-ticket stubs; for *Stella* to do these things struck him as an outrage, an insult to the natural order of things.

"Look, darling," he'd said (and the cold savagery of his tone had seemed to Stella quite out of proportion to her very minor misdemeanor—a single tentative little phone call to his secretary asking, just simply asking, what time he was expected back from Wolverhampton), "Look, darling, when a married man starts an affair, it's because he wants to get *away* from that sort of thing, not because he wants more of it! He has enough trouble getting a few hours' freedom as it is, without having his mistress waiting for him like a cat at a mousehole every time he steps outside his front door!"

A speech both cruel and uncalled-for, and Stella had been dreadfully upset. But being upset never got her anywhere with Gerald,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it just made him avoid answering the telephone; and so after a while she'd stopped being upset, and had resolved to watch her step even more carefully in the future. And so that was why, when the Aunt Esmé "bit" cropped up, she'd let it pass without a flicker of protest. Dumber than the dumbest blonde she'd been, as she sleeked back her wings of black burnished hair and listened, her dark eyes wide and trusting, while he floundered deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of lies and evasions from which he would never (unless she, Stella, chose to assist him) be able to extricate himself.

For the lies hadn't ended with the meeting of "Aunt Esmé" at the airport; they had gone on for weeks. Because that hypothetical lady's visit had proved to be a long one, and packed with incident. She had to be taken to the theater on just the night when Gerald usually went out with Stella; she caught the flu on the exact weekend when Gerald and Stella had planned a trip to the country; and when Stella herself caught the flu, she had to have it alone because it just so happened that Aunt Esmé had to be taken on a visit to an old school friend in Bournemouth at just that time.

And Stella had taken it all smiling. Smiling, smiling endlessly down the telephone, making understanding noises, and never questioning, never protesting. It had been over a year later (surely a *year* is long enough, surely no one could accuse her of checking up after a *year*?) before Stella had ventured, warily, and with lowered eyelashes, to ask after Aunt Esmé. Had they seen her lately, or had a card from her, she'd asked innocently, one late December day when Gerald, preoccupied, filled and brimming over with family life, had driven over hastily with Stella's present. Jewelry again, and expensive—Gerald was good at that sort of thing.

Stella thanked him prettily, even warmly; and then, still prettily, she tossed her bombshell into his face. "Have you heard from Aunt Esmé lately?" she asked, and enjoyed, as she only rarely enjoyed his lovemaking, the look of blank uncomplicated bewilderment that spread over his pink, self-absorbed features. Not even any wariness, so completely had he forgotten the whole thing.

"Aunt Esmé? Who's Aunt Esmé?" he asked curiously, quite unsuspicious.

Stella had intended it to stop there, to brush it off with a light "Oh, well, I must be mixing it up with some other family"; to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leave him unscathed, untouched by guilt, and to savour her triumph in secret. But the temptation to go on, to spring the trap, was irresistible.

"Aunt *Esmé*, darling! You know—the one you had staying with you for all that time last winter"—and as she spoke Stella watched, with terror and with glee, the dawning of guilt and alarm in his plump lazy features. Fear, calculation, and panic darted like fishes back and forth across his countenance; and then he recovered himself.

Of course! How stupid! Dear old *Esmé*, she must mean! Not an aunt at all, but the old family governess from Wendy's mother's old home—the children had been taught to call her "aunt" because, you know . . .

And of course Stella *did* know, smiling and lying and letting him off the hook. She, too, had had an "aunt" like that in her childhood. An Aunt Polly (she quickly improvised) who had made gingerbread animals. Smiling, inventing, chattering, breathlessly easing the embarrassment, Stella was nevertheless already making her plans. In a year's time—or maybe two years—"How's your mother-in-law's old governess getting on?" she'd ask, all innocence, watching his face while he blundered into the trap. "*Governess*? But Wendy's mother never had—" And while his words stuttered into silence, she would be watching his face, never taking her eyes off it as it disintegrated into terror, bewilderment, and guilt.

Guilt, that was the important thing. Guilt so richly deserved and so long outstanding, like an unpaid debt. Such a sense of power it gave her to be able to call him to account like this, just now and again—a sense of power which compensated, in some measure, for the awful weakness of her actual position, the terrible uncertainty of her hold on him. To be able to make him squirm like this every so often was a sort of redressing of some desperate balance—a long-merited turning of the tables without which Stella sometimes felt she could not have gone on.

Oh, but it was fun too! A sort of game of catch-me-if-you-can, a fun game. Not quite as much fun, though, as it used to be, because of late Gerald had been growing more wary, less easily trapped. He was more evasive now, less buoyantly ready to come out with giveaway remarks like "*What* trip to Manchester, darling?" or "But they've never *had* measles." Now, before he spoke,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you could see him checking through the lies he had told recently, his gray-green eyes remote and sly.

And as Gerald grew more wary, so did Stella grow more cunning. The questions by which she trapped him were never direct ones now, but infinitely subtle and devious. It was a dangerous sport, and, like all dangerous sports, it demanded skill and judgment, a sure eye and perfect timing. Push Gerald too far, and she would have a terrible, terrifying row on her hands. "Possessive! Demanding!"—and all the other age-old accusations hurtling round her head.

Push him not far enough, however, and the opposite set of mishaps would be set in motion. He would start thinking he could get away with anything, leaving her for days on end without so much as a phone call, and then turning up all smiles, as if nothing had happened, and expecting her to cook him steak and collect his shoes from the repairers. Taking her for granted, just as if she was a wife—and what sensible woman is going to put up with all the disadvantages of being married *as well as* all the disadvantages of not being?

It was a cliff-hanger business, though, getting the push exactly right. Only a few months ago Gerald had actually threatened to leave her if she didn't stop spying on him—though surely "spying" was an unduly harsh term to apply to Stella's innocent little show of interest in the details of the business conference he'd pretended to attend the previous weekend?

"But darling, Lord Berners wasn't *at* the dinner!" she'd pointed out, with a placating little laugh, just to save Gerald the trouble of inventing any more humorous quotes from a non-existent speech. "I read in *The Times* the next morning that"—and at this, quite suddenly, he had gone berserk, and had turned on her like an animal at bay. His rage, his dreadful, unwarranted accusations, were like nothing she had ever heard before, and they threw her into such terror that she scarcely knew what she was doing or saying.

In the end he had flung himself out of the flat, slamming the door on her tears and screams, and vowing never to set foot in the place again. It had taken an undated suicide note, no less, to bring him back again. It was just about as generous a suicide note as any woman has ever penned to a recalcitrant lover, and Stella still remembered it with a certain measure of satisfaction, despite the misery pertaining to its composition.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You mustn't blame yourself, darling," she'd written. "It is my decision, and mine alone. If I cannot face life without you, that is *my* problem, not yours. So don't, my love, feel that you have to come rushing round when you get this letter. The very last thing I want—or have ever wanted—is to inconvenience you in any way, or make you feel guilty. By the time you get this, darling, I shall be dead . . ."

The posts must have been slow that week, because it was nearly three days before she at last heard his feet pounding up the stairs, and had started taking the pills, stuffing them into her mouth in handfuls as he burst into the room.

It had been worth it, though. He'd been sweet to her for days afterward, visiting her often in the hospital; and even after she got home, he'd continued to shower her with presents, calling every day, and displaying in full measure all the remorse, the tenderness, the self-recrimination that such a situation demands of a man.

Until, of course, he got bored with it. First bored, then resentful, and finally beginning to throw the thing up to her in their arguments. "Blackmail," he called it now whenever Stella tried to get him to do anything he didn't want to do; and Stella began to realize, gradually, that she was right back at square one—having to be careful, careful, knowing all the time that the only way she could hold him now was by avoiding quarrels and by being infinitely tolerant and understanding—in short, by letting him get away with every bloody thing.

And this was why, this summer Saturday afternoon, Stella, her teeth set in a smile, was making herself listen without a murmur to what Gerald was saying. She had known, of course, the *kind* of thing it would be; married men always have such *righteous* reasons for letting you down. Sick wives, kids on holiday, family visits—all perfectly uncheckable, and all revealing what a kind, compassionate, virtuous, dutiful creature the lying, treacherous creature really is.

So what was it *this* time?

Simon's Sports Day. Gerald was potty about that son of his.

"You *do* understand, don't you, darling," he was pleading; and of course she understood very well, she understood that he preferred the prospect of watching a nine-year-old running across a field in gym shoes to the prospect of spending the whole long afternoon with his mistress, cool and mysterious in her darkened flat, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sunlight flickering across the bed through the slatted blinds.

"You see, darling, the thing is, he might *win*! Only nine and he might actually win the under-eleven two hundred and fifty yards! He's a marvelous little runner, Mr. Foulkes tells me—a real athlete's body!"

A real athlete's body. The light shining in Gerald's eyes was something Stella had never seen before. For a few seconds she tried to imagine what it would be like to be the mother of that athlete's body, to have produced it jointly with Gerald, to have a right, now, to a share in that idiotic pride. At the sight of those heavy, self-indulgent features thus irradiated, Stella felt a great darkness coming around her. It came like a black monstrous wave, engulfing her, leaving her bereft of speech.

"I wouldn't miss it for a million pounds!" she heard him saying, from somewhere outside the swirling blackness. "To hear his name called—Simon Graves—my own son! And then the clapping, the cheers! And him only nine! The others are all over ten, darling, *all* of them! He's the only nine-year-old who managed to. . ."

She preferred his lies, preferred them a thousand times. How could she have guessed that the truth, when she finally heard it from those evasive, prevaricating lips, would hurt as much as this?

The school gates were propped wide-open and welcoming, and through them, in the blazing sunshine, trooped the mothers and the fathers, the sisters and the girl friends, the aunts and the uncles. With their white sandals, their bright cotton dresses or pale freshly ironed slacks, women just like Stella, in their early thirties. Among so many, who was going to give her a second glance? Unless, of course, she gave herself away somehow—walking too fast, maybe, or letting her eyes flit too anxiously from side to side?

The fathers were less numerous than their womenfolk, which made Stella's task that much easier; they stuck out among the bright dresses like the dark stumps of trees. Stella's eyes darted from one to another of them ceaselessly, for he might be anywhere; and supposing—just supposing—he were to catch sight of her before she'd managed to locate him?

Not a big risk, really. For she had the advantage that the hunter always has over the prey—she knew what she was looking for, and what she meant to do when she found it; whereas Gerald

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not only wasn't on the watch for her, he hadn't the slightest suspicion she could possibly be here at all. On top of which she had, after a fashion, disguised herself with a pair of large round sunglasses, and a white silk bandanna wound tightly round her black shining hair.

Across the lawn, up under the avenue of limes, the slow procession wound, chattering, exclaiming, exchanging greetings; some were already fanning themselves against the heat. Slowly likewise, but with her heart hammering, Stella matched her pace with the rest; and it was not until she had settled herself on the grass at the far end of a long line of deck chairs facing the sports field that Stella began to breathe more easily. Hemmed-in by all these chairs, she could scarcely be seen from more than a yard or two away, and yet by craning her neck she could get a good view of the crowd still winding up from the school buildings. Here and there a dark head, taller than the rest, would make her catch her breath; but always, it was a false alarm.

And now, here was the junior master walking up and down with his loudspeaker, announcing the order of events. Already the crowd was falling into an expectant silence, the thousand voices dying away in wave after wave, fading away like the twitter of birds at twilight.

And still Gerald hadn't arrived.

Had he been lying to her after all? Had his afternoon's truancy nothing to do with Simon's Sports Day, in spite of all those passionate declarations of paternal pride? The swine! The double-crossing, treacherous swine! All that emotion wasted—not to mention having let herself in for a long hot afternoon of boredom, all for nothing!

I'll teach you, Gerald Graves! I'll teach you to lie to me, make a fool of me! Thought you'd got away with it, didn't you?—*I'll* show you!

Already she could feel a line of sweat gathering under the bandanna, along her hairline; she'd never worn such a thing before, and by the Lord, she thought, I never will again! *I'll* show him!

"Under sixteen hurdles . . ."

"Quarter mile, under fourteen . . ."

The sheer tedium of it was beginning to make Stella feel quite ill; her back ached, her eyes burned, and her brain felt half addled with heat and boredom.

Long jump. High jump . . . on and on the thing droned; whistles

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

blew, shouts exploded into the shimmering air and died away again; the clapping and the cheering rose, and fell, and rose again. Cup for this, prize for that. The sun beat down, the voices swelled and receded, and then, just when Stella was on the verge of sleep, she heard it.

"Simon Graves! Winner of the under-eleven two hundred and fifty yards! Simon Graves!"

Stella was sitting bolt upright now, peering past the forest of chairs to get a glimpse of the sports field; but before she had time to locate the dark-haired little boy scuttling proudly toward the sidelines, she became aware of a little commotion going on in front of her and a few yards to the right.

"*Simon*! Our Simon! He's *done* it, Mummy! Daddy said he would! Oh, Simon—Si-i-i-mon!"

"Hush, darling, hush, Carol, you must sit down." A plumpish smiling woman was pulling at the sleeve of a wildly gesticulating little girl of about seven, urging her back into her seat. "Hush, Carol darling, not so loud. Simon'll be embarrassed. Oh, but won't Daddy be pleased!"

"Daddy will say," "Daddy will think"—and where the hell *was* Daddy, if one might inquire? "Wouldn't miss it for a million pounds," he'd said. Someone, somewhere, worth *more* than a million this bright afternoon?

Peering between the lines of chairs, Stella could see that the exultant mother and little sister were about to receive their hero. Pounding up the bank he came, wiry and brown and all lit up with triumph, hurling himself on his mother and sister amid a babel of congratulations.

Past the chairs, past the stirring smiling people, Stella watched, and kept very still. What *right* had the three of them to such joy, such total undiluted happiness? Didn't they know that the foundations of it were rotten, that their cosy little family life was based on a rotting, disintegrating substructure of lies and cheating? "Daddy" this and "Daddy" that—it made her feel quite sick to listen to the shrill little voices filled with such baseless adoration.

Quietly, unobtrusively, Stella got to her feet, and worked her way between the rows of chairs. She reached the little girl just when her mother and brother had turned away for a moment, receiving further congratulations. Quickly Stella dropped on her knees in front of the child, bringing their faces level.

"Do you know why your Daddy isn't here?" she said softly. "It's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because he's spent the afternoon with me! In bed. Do you understand?"

The blank, almost stupid look on the child's face maddened her, and the blank look remained on the child's face. But Stella had the satisfaction, after she had squeezed back past row after row of chairs and had almost escaped from the enclosure, of hearing Carol, at last, burst into loud sobbing.

It was nearly ten o'clock when, at long last, she heard Gerald's step on the stairs; and even after all these hours she still could not have said if she had been expecting him to come, or to stay away.

He'd be angry, of course. But also, surely, relieved? Five years of secrecy was too much; it would be a relief to both of them to have it out in the open.

"Don't you agree, darling, that it is high time we had it out in the open?" she was asking, for the fourth or fifth time, of the silent slumped figure in the armchair. She'd been trying ever since his arrival to extract some sort of response from him. She'd tried everything, even congratulating him on his son's success.

"Pity you weren't there to see it," she'd been unable to resist adding; but even this had provoked from Gerald nothing more than the bald factual statement that he *had* seen it, thank you, from the Pavilion, where some of the fathers were helping to organize the boys.

Then more silence. She tried again.

"I'm sorry, Gerald darling, if Carol—if the little girl—was upset. I didn't mean to upset her, I just thought that the children should know about us. I don't believe in lies and deceit with children. I think they are entitled to the truth. Oh, darling, please don't look at me like that! It's been a shock, I know, but I'm sure that when you've had time to think about it, you'll see it's been for the best. The best for *us*—and for Wendy too. She can't have liked all this lying and deception all these years. I'm sure she'd rather know where she stands, and be able to start making sensible plans for the future.

"I mean, Wendy looks quite a nice sort of person. I don't think she'll make any trouble once she understands that we love each other. Oh, darling, what *is* it? Why don't you *say* something? Look, let's have a drink, and relax, and think what we're going to do when the unpleasantness is all over. This flat is a bit small for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the two of us, but assuming that you'll be getting half of the value of your house, then between us we could—"

And now, at last, he *did* make a move. He rose stiffly, as if he suffered from rheumatism, and went to pour them each a large glass of whiskey. He handed her a glass in silence, and then, swallowing his at a gulp, he walked over to the table in the window where Stella's typewriter stood, open. Laboriously, with one finger, he began to type.

Stella waited a minute, two minutes, then walked over to look.

Gerald B. Graves
27 Firfield Gardens
Sydenham Way

The long manila envelope stared up at her from the typewriter carriage; she watched, stupefied, while he finished the last few letters of the address. Then—

"Whatever are you doing, darling?" she asked, with an uneasy little laugh. "Are you writing a letter to *yourself*?"

And then she saw it, just by his right hand. Her own suicide note of last autumn—*"By the time you get this, darling, I shall be dead. . ."*

"The handwriting will be unquestionably yours," he observed conversationally, "and the address will have been typed on your typewriter. The postmark will also be right, as I shall post it myself, on my way out. It should reach me at breakfast time the day after tomorrow, just in time to show to the police. And now, my dear, just one more little job, and we shall be finished."

And as he stood up and turned toward her, the light from the lamp fell full onto his face, and she saw the look in his eyes.

"No! No!" she gasped, took a step backward, and shrank, whimpering, against the wall.

"I intend it to look like suicide," he said, as if reassuring her; and as he moved across the carpet toward her, Stella's last coherent thought was: he will too! He'll get away with it, he'll lie his way out of it, just as he's always lied his way out of everything!

How accomplished a liar he was, she knew better than anyone, for it was she who had trained him—trained him, like a circus animal, over five long years.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Dr. Sam Hawthorne story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Another baffling tale from the memory book of Dr. Sam Hawthorne, the retired New England general practitioner who had a special affinity for "impossible crimes"—how young Tommy Belmont miraculously vanished into thin air while swinging from the big oak tree in the schoolyard. It just couldn't have happened—yet it did!—"right under the eyes of Mrs. Sawyer," the teacher. . .

THE PROBLEM OF THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

by EDWARD D. HOCH

"Sure, we had one-room schoolhouses back in my day," Dr. Sam Hawthorne said. " 'Fact, one of my most bafflin' cases involved a kidnapin' at a little red schoolhouse. This was in the fall of 1925, you realize—nearly seven years before the Lindbergh case put kidnapin' on the front pages and got a law passed makin' it a federal crime. Here, let me pour you—ah—a small libation and tell you what happened . . ."

My position as one of the few doctors in the area (Dr. Sam Hawthorne began) was what got me into the case in the first place. I had a call from Mrs. Deasey, the widow up on Turk Hill, who said her little boy was just home from school and actin' strange. We'd had a bit of polio back in the summer that year, and though I knew the frost had lessened the danger it still seemed like a good idea for me to ride out and see what the trouble was. I told my nurse April where I'd be, then collected my bag and started up to Turk Hill in my yellow Pierce-Arrow Runabout.

Turk Hill had originally been called Turkey Hill, back in the days when there were still wild turkeys to be seen around

© 1976 by Edward D. Hoch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Northmont. It had always been the back end of town, the area that well-to-do people avoided. Even the farming land was second-rate on Turk Hill, and in that autumn of '25 there were only three houses still lived in up there. Mrs. Deasey tried her best to farm the land her husband had left her, but the other two made no pretense of farmin'. One was a hermit nobody ever saw, an' the other was a young French-Canadian everyone suspected of making illegal whiskey in a hidden still.

As I turned my car into the rutted driveway of her farm, Mrs. Deasey came out to meet me. "I swear I don't know what's got into that child, Dr. Sam. He come home from school today all frightened of somethin'. He won't talk to me about it, whatever it is. I don't know if he's sick or what."

Robert was her only child—an undersized boy of nine who'd already had the usual assortment of childhood illnesses. I found him around the back of the barn, throwing rocks at some target invisible to me. "Hello, Robert," I called to him. "Feelin' a bit under the weather?"

He turned away from me. "I'm okay."

But he was pale, and when I touched the clammy skin of his face he shivered a little. "What's the trouble? You've had a fright, haven't you? Something on the way back from school?" I knew his route home took him past the other two occupied houses on Turk Hill, and there might be something at either place to frighten a lad of nine. Then too, I was remembering his father's mental problems before he died. Was Robert beginnin' to imagine things too?

"It's nothin'," the boy mumbled and went back to throwing stones.

"Did somebody scare you? Threaten you?"

"No." He hesitated. "It's Tommy Belmont."

I tried to touch him again but he broke free and ran away, heading out into the field. I knew I could never catch him, so I turned back to the farmhouse where his mother was waiting.

"He appears to have had a bad fright," I told her. "But he should get over it. Boys his age usually do. See how he is in the mornin'. If there's still some problem, call me on the telephone." The farms on Turk Hill had been linked to town by a party line just the year before, though it was common knowledge Old Josh the hermit had taken a shotgun to the telephone men when they approached his place.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thank you for comin', Dr. Sam. It relieves my mind to know it's nothin' serious." She fumbled in her apron pocket. "How much am I owin' you?"

"Nothin' yet. Let's make sure he's all right."

Robert had appeared around the corner of the barn, prob'ly to see if I was gone yet, and I waved goodbye as I climbed into my car. There was nothing more to be done here, but I had the feeling I should talk to young Tommy Belmont.

Unlike Mrs. Deasey and her son, the Belmonts lived in the wealthier part of Northmont, on a hundred-acre dairy farm. Herb Belmont was the town equivalent of a gentleman farmer, spending much of his time with area dairymen and Boston bankers while paid employees fed and milked the cows.

The Belmonts had two sons and a daughter, but the older son was away at school in Boston and the girl was only four. There was just Tommy to attend the one-room schoolhouse at the edge of town.

Tommy was a frisky lad of ten, with flaming red hair and freckles to match, who looked for all the world as if he'd escaped from a book by Mark Twain. I almost expected to see him whitewashin' a fence as I pulled up and parked, but instead all I saw was the familiar black police car belonging to Sheriff Lens.

As I went up the walk to the front door, the sheriff himself appeared. "What you doin' here, Dr. Sam?" he asked. "Somebody call you?"

"No. Is something the matter, Sheriff?"

"You'd better come in. Mebbe you can help with Mrs. Belmont."

I walked into the living room and found the woman in tears, hunched in a big flowered chair and being comforted by her husband. "What is it?" I asked Herb Belmont. "Has something happened to Tommy?"

The boy's father stared at me. "He's been kidnaped."

"Kidnaped!"

"He disappeared from the schoolhouse yard, right under the eyes of Mrs. Sawyer. And now there's been a demand for ransom."

"A note?"

"A call on the telephone—a voice I never heard before, sayin' they want $50,000 or they'll kill Tommy!" His voice broke and there was renewed sobbing from Mrs. Belmont.

"Tarnation!" Sheriff Lens thundered. "Ain't nothin' like this ever happened in Northmont afore!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"When do you have to deliver the money?" I asked, trying to calm them with conversation.

"They said they'd telephone again."

I turned to the sheriff. "It should be no trouble tracin' that call. Jinny down at the switchboard must know who made it."

He nodded agreement. "I'll go check on it."

"And I'll go talk to Mrs. Sawyer at the schoolhouse," I said. "I want to find out more about this disappearance."

Some neighbors came in to stay with the Belmonts, and I went off in my automobile to the schoolhouse on the hill. I didn't know if Mrs. Sawyer would still be there at four in the afternoon, but her house was within walking distance and I figured I'd find her at one place or the other.

Though there was a newer high school built just after the war at the other end of town, the grammar-school pupils still went to the traditional little red schoolhouse set off by itself on a rise of ground not far from Turk Hill. Mrs. Sawyer, a widow who'd lost her husband in France, presided over the 38 students with a firm grip on the realities of New England life, instructing them on the sort of life that might await those who ventured to Boston or even to New York. She held daily fingernail inspection for all the children, and kept a chart of health chores they had to perform.

When I reached the school she was still there, straining to close a balky window with a wooden window pole bent dangerously close to the breaking point.

"Here, let me do that for you," I said as I entered.

"Dr. Sam! You startled me." She flushed a bit and handed me the pole. She was still an attractive woman, though the years without her husband were beginning to tell on her.

I closed the window and returned the pole to the corner. "I came about Tommy Belmont," I said.

"Tommy! Have they found him?"

"No. Somebody called the Belmont house to say he'd been kidnaped."

"Oh, surely not! Not that—not in Northmont!" She collapsed onto the nearest chair. "I swear he wasn't out of my sight for more than a few seconds. It just couldn't be!"

"Suppose you tell me what happened."

"Nothing happened—that's just it! During the recess Tommy was out playing' with the other boys. They avoided the girls—you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

know how it is at that age—but they seemed to be having a fine old time, just like any other noon recess. They'd been down the hill to Mr. Tilley's wagon for treats and they were back up swingin' and chasin' around as boys will do. I remember seeing Tommy on the swing, going up higher than I'd ever seen him go before. It looked as if he were going all the way to heaven. I glanced away for just a few seconds, when I rang the bell to summon them all back inside, and when I looked back the swing was empty, movin' gently back and forth as if someone had just left it. When they all trooped in, Tommy wasn't among them. He wasn't anywhere, Dr. Sam!"

"Perhaps he went down the hill for more treats."

"No, no. Mr. Tilley had been gone a good ten minutes by that time, and there was no one else on the road. I can see in both directions from up here—look for yourself. There's not even a tree except the big oak the two swings are attached to."

"Was anyone else swinging?"

"No, Tommy was alone. I looked behind the tree, and in the outhouse, and around the other side of the school building. I sent all the children to look for him—but he wasn't anywhere."

"He must have just wandered off."

She stamped her foot. "He *couldn't* have, Dr. Sam! I tell you he was on that swing an' off it, all in a few seconds. I was here in the doorway. There was noplace he could have gotten to without my seein' him! And as for kidnapin', well, who could have taken him? There wasn't another adult on this hill all day, and none of the other children was missin'. He didn't leave by himself and nobody came to get him. He just—vanished."

I walked outside and stared up at the oak tree, then tugged on the ropes that held the swings side by side. "Could he have gone up in the tree?"

"How? The nearest limb is at least fifteen feet up."

"You said he was swinging high."

"He didn't sail off that swing into the tree, Dr. Sam. And he didn't climb the rope, either. I'd have seen him. The other children would have seen him."

"What did you do when you decided he was missin'?"

"When he didn't come back after an hour or so, I sent Mary Lou Phillips over to the Belmont house to tell his folks. We don't have a telephone here."

"What about Robert Deasey?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That little boy? What about him?"

"Was he acting strangely?"

"I suppose all the children were very upset. I didn't rightly notice."

"What about strangers? Has anybody been lurking around the schoolhouse lately?"

"No one—no one at all."

"Come on," I said. "I'll give you a ride home."

She accepted with thanks, though her house was no more than a few yards away. I had a reason for wanting to go there, because it was the closest structure of any sort to the red schoolhouse. I thought Tommy Belmont just might be there, but I was disappointed. The place was empty when I escorted her inside, and Tommy Belmont was still among the missing.

Sheriff Lens had gotten back to the Belmont farm before me. I parked behind his car and hurried inside. "We traced the call," he told me grimly. "Jinny on the switchboard remembers it came from the Leotard place—that French-Canadian up on Turk Hill. She remembered it especially 'cause he don't make that many calls an' he never made one afore to the Belmont place."

"You think the boy is there?"

"Where else? I don't want to risk goin' up there in daylight, so we'll wait a couple hours till dark. Then me an' my deputies will storm the farmhouse an' rescue the lad."

"Sounds simple," I agreed, but the thought of it troubled me. Could kidnapers be that foolish, to telephone the ransom demand from their own home?

But the news seemed to have bolstered the spirits of the Belmonts, and for that I was thankful. In fact, I was preparing to leave them again when the telephone gave its characteristic double ring.

Tommy's father grabbed the receiver. "Hello? Hello?"

The receiver wasn't quite pressed to his ear, so I could hear the child's terrified, high-pitched voice. I darted forward, reaching Belmont's side before either his wife or Sheriff Lens. But now the child's voice had been replaced by another, harsher tone. "That was to show you we've really got him. We'll deal with him the way Loeb and Leopold did with Bobby Franks, unless you come up with the fifty thousand dollars in a hurry!"

"I—the bank won't be open till morning."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It'll open special for you. Have the money in your house tonight, and we'll telephone again with instructions."

The telephone went dead. Belmont waited a moment and then replaced the receiver. "My God!" he mumbled. "They'll kill him!"

"We'll see to it they won't, Mr. Belmont," the sheriff told him. "Now, don't you worry none."

I took a deep breath. "You still think they've got him at the Leotard farm?"

"Sure do! But I'll just check with Jinny." He picked up the telephone and had the operator in a moment. "Jinny? Where'd that last call come from?" He listened to her reply and then said, "Fine, Jinny. You done good work."

"Leotard again?" I asked.

Sheriff Lens nodded. "She listened in this time an' heard the boy."

"But did she recognize Leotard's voice?"

"You heard him—he had it disguised."

"I don't know. It all seems too easy."

"He mentioned Loeb an' Leopold, didn't he? And his name's *Leo*tard, ain't it? The guy imagines himself another thrill killer like Leopold."

"Not a killer," Mrs. Belmont gasped. "No, not that!"

"Sorry," Sheriff Lens mumbled. "Figure o' speech."

I could see that Tommy's mother was only moments away from fainting. I led her into the sitting room where there was a couch and got her to lie down. "I've got some sleeping powder here if you think it would help you," I suggested.

"No, no, I have to be awake for Tommy!"

"There's nothing you can do right now, Mrs. Belmont."

Even under extreme stress she was a handsome woman. Her son's flaming red hair had obviously come from her. "There's *surely* nothing I can do if I'm unconscious!"

There was no point in arguin' with her. "Try to rest anyway. You may need your strength later, after Tommy is released."

"Do you think he will be released? Do you think I'll ever see him alive again?"

"I'm sure of it," I said, trying to sound confident. "Now answer a couple of questions for me. What was Tommy wearing today?"

"Brown pants, striped shirt, and a necktie, just like all the other boys. That Mrs. Sawyer insists they wear neckties, 'cept in the hot weather."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who were his closest friends at school?"

"There weren't any really close, but sometimes after classes he played with that Deasey boy up on Turk Hill."

"I see." I checked her pulse one more time and then rose to leave. "You take it easy, Mrs. Belmont. We'll get Tommy back for you. I promise you."

I left the Belmont farm and drove around the back roads for a half hour till finally I spotted Mr. Tilley's wagon. Tilley was a peddler who'd become a familiar figure on the county roads, hawking household goods and candy for the kids and even doin' a little repair work for farm wives while their husbands were busy in the fields. The sides of his horse-drawn wagon carried only his name—*Tilley*—but everyone knew what he had to sell. Besides, a list of all the things he carried in the wagon wouldn't fit on the sides.

Tilley had a son about Tommy Belmont's age, though no one ever heard tell of a Mrs. Tilley anywhere. As I drove up to the wagon in my car, I could see the Tilley boy up on the seat next to his father. He hopped down when he saw me stop and came runnin' over to examine my yellow Pierce-Arrow, as boys always did.

" 'Evenin', Mr. Tilley," I called out, strolling over to the wagon. It was not yet dark, but anytime after six was considered evenin' in Northmont. "Had a good day?"

"Middlin'," the peddler said, climbing down from his rig. "This time o' year one day's pretty much like another."

"You hear about the Belmont boy?"

He nodded. "I was just up on Turk Hill an' Mrs. Deasey told me. Turrible thing for the town. People come out here to get away from all that big-city crime."

"Your boy is at school with Tommy Belmont, isn't he?"

"Sure is." The peddler scratched his day-old growth of beard. "Frank, come over here an' talk to the man. Did you see Tommy Belmont today before he disappeared?"

"Sure did. So did you—he bought some penny candy off'n the wagon at lunchtime."

"I remember him now. Red-haired boy. Stands out in a crowd."

I turned to Frank Tilley. "Any other redheads in the class?"

"Not like Tommy. His hair's like a fire engine."

"So he bought some penny candy from you?" I asked Tilley.

"Sure did."

"Then what?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Him an' Frank went runnin' back up the hill. I watched them a bit till they started swingin'. Then I got old Daisy here movin' along."

"So you weren't there when he disappeared?"

"No, I was long gone."

"Did you see anyone else on the road? Another wagon maybe?"

"Not a one."

"Mr. Tilley, I been up talkin' to the teacher, Mrs. Sawyer. She claims Tommy was swingin' on the swings and then he just disappeared. She claims there was noplace he could have gone where she wouldn't have seen him."

The peddler shrugged. "Mebbe he went to the outhouse."

"She looked there. She looked everywhere. And if he'd run down the hill she'd have seen him. She's positive."

"Well, he sure wasn't kidnaped by no aeroplane!"

"No," I agreed. I was staring through the twilight at the houses up on Turk Hill, thinking about Sheriff Lens and his plan to raid the Leotard place. Suddenly I had an idea. "Mr. Tilley, do you ever call on the hermit up there?"

"Ain't seen him in months. Don't think he lives there any more."

"Could we ride up and take a look?"

"Right now?"

"Right now."

I got up on the seat next to Mr. Tilley, while young Frank opened the rear doors and climbed into the back of the wagon. My car would be safe where it was, and I knew I'd attract far less attention approaching Turk Hill on Tilley's wagon.

By the time we reached the hermit's place it was growing dark. Tilley clanged his bell and called out, "Household goods, candy, pots an' pans. Knives sharpened, repairs made, electrical gadgets put in order!"

This last seemed unnecessary, since there were no electrical lines running into the hermit's house. The hermit had a name, Old Josh, but hardly anyone ever called him that. He was just the hermit of Northmont and word was he might have been a deserter hiding out since the Spanish-American War.

Now I ran around the far side of Mr. Tilley's wagon and into the tall grass. I didn't want to get a shotgun blast from one of the windows, either from the hermit or the kidnapers I thought might be there. I made a wide careful circle to the back door and was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surprised to find it unlocked. Opening it slowly, I went in on my hands and knees. An odor of rank must hit my nostrils, but there was no sound.

With barely enough twilight left to see my way around, I rose quickly to my feet and made my way through the rooms cluttered with broken-down furniture, dirty plates, and dusty newspapers. One paper I picked up was more than a year old, and it seemed unlikely that the hermit of Turk Hill had received any recent visitors.

I opened the door to the cellar steps, and that was when the odor hit me. I'd been a doctor long enough to recognize it as that of a body long dead. Old Josh was crumpled at the bottom of the stairs, where he'd fallen and died months ago. There were no kidnapers here—only a lonely old man who'd died alone.

Outside, Tilley had started ringing his bell again—as if to summon me. I went out and he came runnin' up. "There's somethin' goin' on at the Leotard place. I thought I heard a shot."

"Stay here," I told him. "I'll go see."

It was only a short distance across the fields to the Leotard house, and before I was halfway there I could make out the sheriff's car in the rutted driveway. There was some sort of commotion, and a good deal of shoutin', but Sheriff Lens seemed to have matters firmly in hand. He was standin' in the light from his car's headlamps, holding a long-barreled revolver pointed straight at Marcel Leotard. The young French-Canadian stood with his hands raised above his head.

"Hello, Dr. Sam," the sheriff greeted me. "You're just in time."

"Did you find the boy?"

"Well, no. But my men are still searchin' the outbuildings. He's gotta be here somewhere. We already uncovered a couple of cases o' bootleg whiskey."

Leotard tried to lower his hands. "This is an insult! I know nothing of any kidnaping. I did not even know the boy was missing!"

"The kidnapers used your telephone," Sheriff Lens informed him.

"Impossible!"

"Why'd you take a shot at me when we drove up?"

"I—I thought it was someone after the whiskey."

A deputy came back from the barn, swingin' a glowin' lantern.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Nothin' back there, Sheriff, 'cept some copper tubing and big vats. Looks like he does a bit o' moonshinin' at times."

Leotard took a step forward and Lens jabbed him with the barrel of his gun. "You just hold it there if you don't want to be a dead man! We're takin' you into town for questionin'."

When the deputies had the handcuffs on him, I told Lens about my discovery at the hermit's house. "Think somebody killed him?" the sheriff asked.

"No sign of it. A man his age probably got dizzy and fell down the stairs. Then he couldn't get up. Not a pleasant way to die, all alone like that."

"What took you over there?"

"Leotard's place seemed too obvious. I got to thinkin' the kidnapers could be somewhere nearby, cutting into the Leotard telephone line for their messages. The hermit's place seemed the most likely, but I was wrong."

Sheriff Lens snorted. "Got any other fine ideas?"

"Just one."

"What's that?"

"Maybe Jinny on the switchboard lied about those calls."

Sheriff Lens sent a couple of deputies over to the hermit's house, and I retrieved my car and followed behind him as he drove Leotard into town. He locked him in a cell, promising to return soon, and then the two of us walked down the block to the wooden telephone exchange building where Jinny was on duty.

She was one of those stocky middle-aged women given to loud talk and too much beer. I liked her, and she'd been a patient of mine off and on, but right now I had to treat her like a suspect. "We have to know about that call, Jinny," I said. "It didn't come from the Leotard place."

"It darn well did!" she answered indignantly.

"I'm not saying you lied, and neither is the sheriff. But maybe you made a mistake."

"No mistake. It came from Leotard's. Look, it just lit up agin!"

I stared in fascinated disbelief at the switchboard. A tiny red light was glowing above the name *Leotard*. "Answer it."

She plugged in and I picked up the earphones. It was the same harsh voice. "Give me the Belmont house."

"One moment," Jinny said, her hand trembling to make the connection.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I could hear only the breathing of the kidnaper. Then Herb Belmont came on the line. "Hello?"

"Do you have the fifty thousand?"

"Yes, I have it. Is Tommy all right? Let me talk to him."

"I want no more raids by Sheriff Lens, or your son dies. Understand that?"

"Yes."

"Put the fifty thousand dollars—in unmarked bills—into a Gladstone bag or a small suitcase. I want that doctor, Sam Hawthorne, to deliver it at midnight tonight. He's to come alone to the red schoolhouse and leave the bag of money by the door. Then he's to drive away. If anyone tries to interfere, the boy dies. Understand?"

"Yes. But is he all right?"

The connection was broken without an answer from the kidnaper. Sheriff Lens, who'd been listening too, looked at me. "I guess you're elected, Doc."

But at the moment I was more interested in who'd made the call—and from where. "Jinny, is it possible these name tags were switched? Could this be someone else's line?"

"No, it's Leotard's, all right. The only other phone on Turk Hill is at the Deasey place."

I remembered Robert Deasey. I shouldn't have forgotten him for so long. "The Deasey place . . ."

"You want to go up there?" Sheriff Lens asked.

"First we'd better check in at the Belmont farm and tell them what's been happening."

Mrs. Sawyer, the teacher, had joined the anxious circle at the Belmont house by the time we arrived. I could see she was trying to comfort the missing boy's mother, but she was having a difficult time of it.

"I hold myself responsible," Mrs. Sawyer said. "Something happened there that I didn't see, didn't notice. The kidnapers got to him somehow."

"You can't blame yourself," I said.

"But I do!"

"Try to think," I said. "Was there anything you forgot to tell me, anything about those last minutes when you saw Tommy on the swing?"

"No."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Was he looking at you?"

"No, he was facing the other way."

"Is there a cellar under the school where he might have hidden?"

"No."

"A nearby cave where the children played?"

"There's nothing like that, Dr. Sam—nothing at all!"

"And yet the kidnaper wants the money delivered back at the school. He must have some way of getting it."

While we talked, Herb Belmont had been busy packing bundles of currency into a black Gladstone bag. "I'm about ready with this, Dr. Sam."

"It's only ten o'clock. We've got two hours yet."

"You got another idea?" Sheriff Lens asked.

"Just one—the Deasey place."

I drove up Turk Hill as I had that afternoon, stopping in front of Mrs. Deasey's farmhouse. She heard the car and came to the door to see who it was.

"Oh, Dr. Sam! I wasn't expectin' you again tonight."

"How's Robert? Is he asleep?"

"I put him to bed, but he's still awake."

"I'd like to see him again if I could."

"Dr. Sam, you don't think he's been—well, imaginin' things, do you?"

"We'll see." I followed her to the small back bedroom on the ground floor. Robert sat up in bed as soon as we entered the room.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Only Dr. Sam again, honey. He wants to see how you're feelin'."

"Leave me alone with him," I suggested, and she returned to the living room.

"Am I really sick, Dr. Sam?" the boy asked.

"That's something you've got to tell me."

"I can't sleep."

"Maybe if you told me what happened today—"

"No!"

"You said earlier it was about Tommy Belmont, but you couldn't have known then he'd been kidnaped. What was it about Tommy that frightened you so?"

He turned his face to the pillow. "Nuthin'."

"Did you see him disappear?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No."

"Well, what then?"

"My mom always says I imagine things. She says if I keep imaginin' things I'll end up in an insane asylum like my dad."

"And that's why you don't want to tell anyone what you saw?"

He nodded, his bobbing head caught by the moonlight streaming through the window. I took his hand and held it tight. "I promise no one's going to send you away for telling me what you saw, Robert. You believe me, don't you?"

"I guess so, Dr. Sam."

"Then tell me. Did you see Tommy disappear?"

"You won't believe me when I tell you."

"Try me anyway."

I could feel his hand tighten in mine. "You see, Dr. Sam, it wasn't that Tommy disappeared at all. It was that I saw two of him."

"Two of him," I repeated.

"Do you believe me, Dr. Sam?"

"I believe you, Robert."

At ten minutes before midnight I parked the Pierce-Arrow at the foot of the little hill and lifted the Gladstone bag from the seat next to me. In the darkness I could barely make out the shape of the little red schoolhouse ahead. Even the moon had sought shelter behind a cloud, and I dared not risk using the lantern I'd brought in the car.

There seemed to be no one around when I reached the door of the one-room schoolhouse and dropped my satchel. I hesitated only an instant and then headed back down the hill. This was the tricky phase of it, when a rash move on my part could endanger the boy's life.

I climbed back into my car and started the motor. "How'd it go?" Sheriff Lens asked in a whisper. He was crouched down in the passenger's seat, half on the floor.

"No sign of anybody."

"He'll come. He ain't goin' to let that fifty grand just sit there."

Then I saw it—a flash of movement on the hill. The moon had come out from behind the clouds, bathing the landscape in a pale unnatural light. "It's a child!" I said.

Lens was up beside me, his pistol out. "Damned if it ain't the Belmont kid! They sent him to collect his own ransom!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Go after him, Sheriff, but be careful."

He jumped out of the car. "What about you?"

"I've got bigger game." I gunned the Pierce-Arrow forward, bumping over the dirt road and rounding a bend.

Ahead of me, targeted in the headlamps, I saw what I'd expected. Pulled up out of sight, under a sheltering willow tree, was Mr. Tilley's wagon. Tilley himself had heard my car approaching. He jumped down from the wagon, taking aim at me with a shotgun.

I jammed the accelerator to the floor and headed straight at him. The roar of the shotgun exploded in front of me, blasting away the right side of my windshield. But then the car hit him, pinning him against his own wagon.

I leaped out and grabbed the shotgun before he could reload. "Damn!" he screamed. "You near killed me with that car! My leg—"

"Shut up and be glad you're alive. I'll take care of your leg."

Sheriff Lens came over the hill then, gripping the red-haired lad with an iron fist and carrying the Gladstone bag with his other hand. "This ain't the Belmont boy!" he called out.

"I know," I told him. "It's Tilley's son Frank, wearin' a bright red wig. Unless I'm mistaken, we're goin' to find Tommy Belmont tied up in this wagon."

It was one o'clock in the mornin' back at the Belmont farm, but it might as well have been high noon from the number of people around the place. Tommy had been in the wagon, all right, bound and gagged, and drugged with sleeping powders. He was still drowsy, but I knew he'd be okay.

His father and Sheriff Lens and Mrs. Sawyer all had questions. Finally I just held up my hands and quieted them. "Calm down now and I'll tell you the whole thing from the beginning."

"I want to know how he vanished from my schoolhouse yard," Mrs. Sawyer said, "before I go out of my mind."

"Tommy was actually kidnaped about ten minutes before you noticed him missing from the swing. He was kidnaped when he went down the hill with the other children to buy candy from Mr. Tilley's wagon. Tilley drugged him with a piece of candy and put him in the back of the wagon. Then Tilley's son Frank took his place, wearing a red wig and with a few freckles painted on his face."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And nobody saw this happen?"

"Mrs. Deasey's son Robert saw it, but he was afraid to tell anyone there'd been two Tommy Belmonts down by that wagon. The false Tommy ran up the hill and began to swing, while the real Tommy was taken away in Tilley's wagon."

"But it was *Tommy* on the swing!" Mrs. Sawyer protested.

I shook my head. "It was a boy dressed like the others, more or less, and with bright red hair. You saw the hair and not the face. Tommy was your only red-haired pupil, so you assumed the boy you saw was Tommy. But you should have known better. When I talked to you earlier you told me Tommy had been swinging higher than you'd ever seen him go before. Why? Because it wasn't Tommy."

"But how'd he disappear?"

"In the simplest way possible. When you turned your head and called the children back into the schoolhouse, Frank Tilley made sure no one was looking, took off the wig, and stuffed it under his shirt. Maybe he wiped off his painted freckles too, with his handkerchief."

"All right," Sheriff Lens conceded. "But what about those telephone calls?"

"Tilley knew all about electrical repairs, remember? He knew about telephones too. He tapped into the line from near the Leotard place to make his calls. He worked right from his wagon all the time, while Tommy was tied up and drugged in the back of it. When he needed a boy to scream into the telephone, he used his son to imitate Tommy."

"How'd you know it was Tilley?" Lens asked.

"His wagon was up around Turk Hill when the ransom calls were made. And I was suspicious when he said he watched Tommy and his son run back up the schoolhouse hill and start swingin' together. Mrs. Sawyer had already told me Tommy was swingin' alone, and she had no reason to lie about it. Once I decided Tommy must have been kidnaped earlier than she realized, Tilley was the only suspect. No one else had come near the school at noon. No one else had a wagon to carry the boy away. The whole business of the mysterious vanishin' was just a ruse to change the *time* of the kidnapin' so we wouldn't think about Tilley, so Tilley could be away from the scene of the crime."

"How'd he expect to get away with it?"

"By tappin' into the telephone lines for his ransom calls, he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

figured to keep us chasin' around the countryside till he had the money. Then he'd high-tail it out of here fast before Tommy could tell us what happened." I didn't raise the possibility that Tilley might have planned to kill Tommy to keep him from talkin'."

"What'll happen to Tilley's son?" Herb Belmont asked.

"That's for the courts to decide," I replied.

"They found a foster home for the Tilley boy in the next town (Dr. Sam concluded), and with a normal family life he turned out right well. His father drew a long sentence, comin' so soon after Leopold and Loeb, and he died in prison.

"I thought that would be enough crime for the year 1925, but I thought wrong. Next time you come by—another small, ah, libation before you go?—I'll tell you about the strange things that happened at the town church—and on Christmas Day, at that!"

"Q"

NEXT MONTH...

12 ***NEW*** stories — including

HUGH PENTECOST (about Jericho)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Captain Leopold)

JACK RITCHIE (about Turnbuckle, Private Eye)

JOYCE PORTER (about Inspector Dover)

URSULA CURTISS (*about the pool sharks*)

and one of her best stories—

AGATHA CHRISTIE's "The Red Signal"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Send me EQMM!

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____

☐ Bill me ☐ Payment Included

☐ 7 issues for ONLY $5.52
(saves me $2.60!)

☐ 14 issues for ONLY $11.04
(savings doubled to $5.20!)

To: **Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine**
P.O. Box 2600
Greenwich, Conn. 06830

H6B417

HOW TO ORDER EQMM AND GET ACQUAINTED WITH EVERY IMPORTANT CRIME WRITER WHO EVER WROTE A SHORT STORY.

You save up to $5.20 off regular rates with this special short-term offer for new readers!

You can count on being intrigued—month after month—by the world's most famous super-sleuths, and being entertained like never before. Mail this coupon today!

ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS
229 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10003

Please send me _____

"Stories To Be Read With The Door Locked"

☐ I enclose $8.95 plus 65 cents shipping and postage, total of $9.60.

Name_____

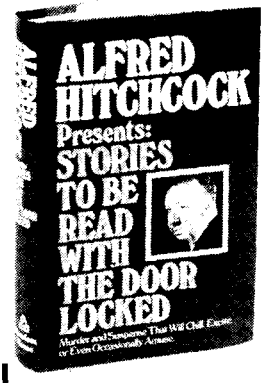
Address_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____

EQMM976

Enjoy this new Library Edition with 30 of the world's greatest mystery writers!



Chill, Thrill & Chuckle

through 365 pages of the best in mystery entertainment, presented by ALFRED HITCHCOCK

4 Novellettes • 26 Stories

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET 50 GREAT MYSTERY THRILLERS FOR LESS THAN 20¢ EACH!

Outstanding Authors Including

• AGATHA CHRISTIE • ERLE STANLEY GARDNER •
• A.A. FAIR • RICHARD PRATHER •
• RAYMOND CHANDLER • BILL PRONZINI

And Many, Many More! Including Such Favorites As

• A.B.C. MURDERS • AND THEN THERE WERE NONE
• DEAD BANG • THE BIG FIX •
• BY PRICKING OF MY THUMBS • MARLOWE •
• THE CASE OF THE BIGAMOUS SPOUSE •
• PASS THE GRAVY • THE CASE OF
THE LONELY HEIRESS • SHILLS CAN'T CASH CHIPS

ORDER NOW BEFORE LIMITED STOCK IS EXHAUSTED.
Substitutions will be made if titles are sold out. This offer expires February 1, 1977.

POCKET BOOKS, Dept. E.Q. 976
229 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10003

Please send me your selection of 50 great mystery books for only $9.95. Enclosed is my check or money order for $9.95 plus $1.25 for postage and handling.

Name_____

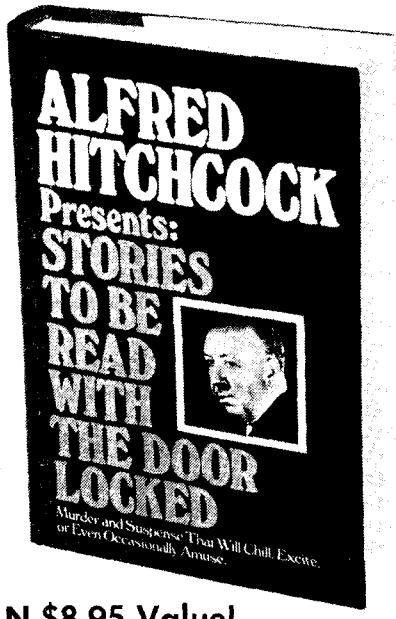
Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ORDER NOW! DON'T MISS THIS BRAND NEW HITCHCOCK OFFER!

The Random House Library Edition of The New ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS "Stories To Be Read With The Door Locked." It's yours at a great bargain when you order a 2 or 3 year subscription of ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE.


ALFRED HITCHCOCK
Presents:
STORIES TO BE READ WITH THE DOOR LOCKED
Murder and Suspense That Will Chill, Excite, or Even Occasionally Amuse.

SAVE UP TO $13.50! **AN $8.95 Value!**

YES! Please send me the New ALFRED HITCHCOCK ANTHOLOGY with its treasure chest of 30 chilling exercises in the art of murder and suspense. I understand that if I order either a 2-year or a 3-year subscription to ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE, the Library Edition is included in the offers shown below and saves me as much as $13.50!

TO: ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
P.O. BOX 2600
Greenwich, Conn. 06830 **SPECIAL CASH OFFERS!**

☐ This is a new order ☐ Please extend my subscription

☐ Enclosed is $17.95 for 2 FULL YEARS of ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE—PLUS the 365-page library Edition. A $26.95 total value, I save $9.00!

☐ Enclosed is $22.45 for 3 FULL YEARS (36 issues) of AHMM—PLUS the new Library Edition. A $35.95 value, I save $13.50!

☐ I enclose $9.00 for 1 FULL YEAR of AHMM. I do not want the Library Edition.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of your first copy of AHMM. H6B425

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified MARKET PLACE

The rate per word for Classified Ads is $1.00 each insertion, minimum ad $15.00—payable in advance. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. Space reservations close 1st of 3rd month preceding COVER date. Send order & remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 229 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

UFO'S ARE REAL. Alabama Man captured by UFO. Incredible true story. It could happen to you. Unforgettable story told in unique illustrated booklet, "I WAS PICKED UP BY a UFO." Excellent seller to stores, mail order, etc. Dealers wanted. Sample $3.25. Guaranteed. Hazlewood, 280 South Prospect, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740.

$200 WEEKLY mailing circulars. Samples 25¢. Grahamco DPBX 99371, Tacoma, WA 98499.

BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

NEW CRAFT PRINT CATALOG — Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send $1.50 (completely refunded with your first order). BOAT BUILDER, (CP Div.) — 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

WHAT'S going on in housing? Get advice on how to economize in modernizing or improving or adding space from idea to completion. Working blueprints available. Send $1.35 for 110 Better Building Ideas to: Davis Publications, Inc., 229 Park Avenue So., NY 10003.

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

LARGE Catalog Free! Mystery-suspense books. Save to 70%. Spencer Books, P.O. Box 186, So. Laguna, CA 92677.

MYSTERIES. Out of Print Paperbacks. Hardcover. Free Lists. Bengta Woo. One Sorgi Court, Plainview, New York 11803.

SPECIALISTS: Mystery—Detective Adventure, Fantasy, Science Fiction Hard Covered. Monthly Catalogues issued. Stephen's Book Service, P.O. Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., NY 11754.

PAPERBACKS—15¢ Up! All Kinds. FREE DISCOUNT Price Lists. Bargain Books, Box 7041-K, Richmond, VA 23221.

UFOs—ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS? Megalithic ruins, dinosaurs, Bermuda Triangle. $1.00. Mysteryology Magazine, Box 6221-CN, Burbank, CA 91510.

FREE CATALOGUES. Detective-Mystery Booksearch. Box 15460, Orlando, FL 32808.

SEND for free catalogs of mystery and detective fiction. Canford Book Corral, Box 216E, Freeville, NY 13068.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS — Cont'd

UFOs—ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS? Pyramids, ghosts, Atlantis, the Flood. $1.00. Mysteryology Magazine, Box 6221-CI, Burbank, CA 91510.

FREE List! Used Hardcover Mystery-Detective Fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

IDEA book for re-doing or adding to your kitchen and bath improvements. Send $1.35 to KITCHEN & BATH IMPROVEMENTS—229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

LOVE a Mystery? Free Mystery-Detective book list. Mystery-House, Box 4235, Reading, PA 19606.

BOOK Readers and Collectors! Send titles wanted: S. & S. Books, 80 North Wilder, E-40, St. Paul, MN 55104.

OLD Mystery & Detective radio shows on tape. Low as $1.87 per hour. Catalog $1.00. Phantom Empire, 2500 Pennington, Houston, TX 77093.

INCOME. Educational, Professional, Sports, Music. List 25¢. Wright's, C-222-S.M., Clintonville, WI 54929.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE Magnetic Signs. Big profits. Details, Universal, Lenora, KS 67645.

HOMEWORK! BIG MONEY addressing, mailing envelopes. Exciting offer 10¢. Linco Services, 3636 Peterson, Chicago, 60659.

FREE Secret Book "2042 Unique, Proven Enterprises." Fabulous "Little Knowns" Work home! HAYLINGS—EI4, Carlsbad, CA 92008.

$30.00 HUNDRED Stuffing Our Circulars into Stamped Addressed Envelopes. Immediate Earnings. Beginners Kit $2.00. COLOSSI, 1433-61 Street, DC-8, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

1000% PROFIT Bronzing Baby Shoes. Free Literature. NBC, Box 1904-DG, Sebring, FL 33870.

"MAKE $70.00 annually doing nothing. $15,000 guaranteed. Free details. Write: Dept. 7-11, RRI, 1817 North Hills Blvd., Knoxville, Tn. 37917.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

COINS

BICENTENNIAL 3 COIN UNCIRCULATED SETS in custom holders $4.95 each. Immediate delivery. Bardee, Box 01-1122, Miami, Fla. 33101.

DETECTIVES

CRIMEFIGHTERS! . . . SHOPLIFTING! . . . LOCK PICKING! . . . DEbugging! All 3 for $5.00. Don-Q, Box 548-dv, Seattle, WA 98111.

DO IT YOURSELF

STOP PAYING EXPENSIVE TV REPAIRS. "Do it yourself." New, easy, method. Details free. Publications, Box 517, Brea, CA 92621.

INFORMATIVE HANDBOOK—For people with an interest in electronics and desire to know more. Covers basic electricity, resistors, capacitors, microwaves, facts on frequency, about fuses, circuit breakers, crystals and much more. Send $1.50 for your copy (includes postage) to: Electronics Theory Handbook, 229 Park Avenue South, N.Y., NY 10003.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTIONS

INFORMATIVE BOOKLET—"How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

TRAVEL with pay! Anywhere! Ships! Secrets revealed! Stamped addressed envelope. Globetrotters, Box 864, St. Joseph, MO 64502.

FOR THE HOME

FOR anyone who wants the satisfaction and economy of repairing, furnishing and maintaining the furniture in his home. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to FURNITURE, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

PUKA shell choker! Authentic Hawaiian—sparkling white grade A with turquoise—$11.79. Agate beggars' beads necklace—50 inch—$19.19. Crazy Heish: Choker (mixed natural shells)—$3.97. Order now, The Howling Owl, P.O. Box 1060, Springfield, VA 22151.

AMAZING free catalog. Selected and distinctive gifts, novelties, items for home, family and friends. Also selected home money making crafts, ideas, hobbys, and retirement projects. Harold's Gifts & Novelties, 500 Trans Mtn. Rd., C-54, Dept. DP07, Canutillo, TX 79835.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Fascinating Hypnosis Information! Startling! DLMH, Box 487 Anaheim, CA 92805.

MISCELLANEOUS

NOISELESS heel taps 10 pairs $3.00. Smallworld, Miami, Fla. 33142.

READ SCI-FI paperbacks. 44¢ each! Free details! PMLOV EQ J-6, King, NC 27021.

TRANSCENDENTAL gastronomic art. Old essay and twelve delicious wildgame recipes from armadillo to woodchuck. Airmail $2.00 to GOURMET, Panajachel, Guatemala.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

STUFF. MAIL ENVELOPES!! $250.00 profit per thousand possible. Offer details: Stamped, self-addressed envelope. Kings, B-21487K-96, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33306.

EXTRA Income!! Compile information in your area. No experience necessary. Details 25¢. Oyewole, Box 4577, New York, NY 10017.

$150.00 WEEKLY stuffing our circulars into stamped addressed envelopes. Guaranteed earnings. Beginners kit $2.00 Malone Box 42-DC7, Brooklyn, New York 11228.

I make $52,000 yearly mailing letters. How? Write: Sandco-IO, Ceres, Ca. 95307.

$500.00 PROFIT Stuffing 1000 envelopes. 25 Cents Details: Canapro Enterprises, Box 215C, Station "H." Montreal, Que., Canada.

WILL You actually (really & truly) address, stuff and mail 20 envelopes a day? Then don't let's mess around. Send $3 and we'll show you how to make up to $1,000 monthly and even much more. Guaranteed! Contractual Arrangements. Habersham Hall, Box 613-Y, Pedro, CA. 90733.

MAKE money. Turn your ideas into cash. Booklet reveals positive plan. Only $1.50. Hub Service, 1075 Main, Box 64, Moncton, N.B., Canada E1C1H2.

BECOME our OPEN HOUSE PARTY PLAN REPRESENTATIVE. Free starting kit. Send $1.00 postage handling. Rayway, 128 Isabelle Street, Metuchen, NJ 08840.

STUFF envelopes 250.00/thousand! Details $1.00, stamped envelope. Croft, Dept. 101, Box 4043, Torrance, CA 90510.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Identity, Box 315-DC, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

PERSONAL—Cont'd

JAPANESE introduction! Girl's photographs, descriptions, brochure, details. $1.00. INTER-PACIFIC, Box 304-SC, Birmingham, MI 48012.

DATES GALORE! Meet singles-anywhere. Call DATELINE, toll-free (800) 451-3245.

"DATE WITH DIGNITY" Professional Matching. Drawer 6765. Fort Worth, 76115 (817) 921-0281 Anytime.

JAPANESE Girls Make Wonderful Wives. We have large number of listings. Many interested in marriage. Only $1.00 brings application, photos, names, descriptions, questionnaire, Etc. Japan International, Box 156-AA, Carnelian Bay, CA 95711.

A serious, informative, entertaining magazine covering just about every topic of interest to hikers. Includes a "Buyers' Guide to Equipment" and a "Beginner's Section" for those who want to learn about hiking and backpacking. Send $1.60 (includes 25¢ for postage/handling) to: Backpacking Journal, 229 Park Avenue South. New York, NY 10003.

BEAUTIFUL MEXICAN GIRLS Wanting American Boy-Friends. Details, Photos "Free," World, Box 3876-DC, San Diego, CA 92103.

DON'T DIE without a will. Protect your family. Two blank WILL FORMS and WILL PAMPHLET $2.00 postpaid. Guaranteed SAVE! Four blank will forms and pamphlet $3.50. HERITAGE GIFTS, 1031-A West 2nd Street, Portales, NM 88130.

PHOTOGRAPHY—PHOTO FINISHING

SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!!! Make your own S & M Densitometer. Send $3.00 for detailed drawings and instructions. A must for successful photography in your darkroom. Order direct: S & M Instruments. Dept. E.Q.9, 229 Park Avenue South, N.Y., NY 10003.

RADIO & TELEVISION

ORIGINAL Radio Mysteries!! Catalogue: $1.00. Catalogue + full hour cassette: $4.98. Specify: Ellery Queen, Shadow, Inner Sanctum, Suspense, Sherlock Holmes, Sam Spade. Radio Mysteries, Box W, Culver City, CA 90230.

DISCOVER how to avoid calling the serviceman. Save by servicing home equipment yourself. Send $1.50 (includes postage) for magazine. RADIO-TV REPAIR—229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

RARE & OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS

LOCATE any Book Detective—Mystery specialty. Catalogue $1.00. Aardvarks Book Detectives, Box 15070, Orlando, FL 32808.

SPECIAL SERVICES

NEED patent information? Send fifteen dollars and stamped envelope. Patents owner, Macon Dungan Rice, Hawthorne, NV 89415.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE ZIP CODE. PLEASE USE IT IN YOUR CLASSIFIED AD.

SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

GIANT Bargain Packed Canadian Surplus Catalogs $1.00. Etco Electronics-DG, Box 741, Montreal "A."

TIPS FOR THE HOME, ETC.

PRACTICAL tips for home, garden and workshop are in "1001 How-To Ideas." Send $1.50 for your copy (includes postage) to 1001 How-To Ideas, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

For Greater Advertising Savings

...Results...and Profits...

Place your ad in one of our SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.
Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.
For further information write to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Manager,
Davis Publications, Inc., 229 Park Ave. So., New York NY 10003.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3 TRAVIS McGEE YARNS PLUS 12 OTHER TOP MYSTERIES—YOURS FOR ONLY $1

Worth $98.80 in Publishers' Editions!

3 By MacDonald

1. The Deep Blue Good-by by John D. MacDonald. Travis McGee's unforgettable debut as a mystery hero. His quarry is a fortune in rare gems and an ex-con who preys on women. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

2. The Dreadful Lemon Sky by John D. MacDonald. The newest best-selling Travis McGee adventure puts him on the track of an international dope ring and some of Florida's leading citizens. (Publ. Ed. $7.50)

3. Nightmare in Pink by John D. MacDonald. Travis McGee hits New York and gets a chance to even an old score. First time in hard-cover. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Gardner

4. The Case of the Postponed Murder by Erle Stanley Gardner. The latest Perry Mason, in which he defends a lady "caught in the act" of murder. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Christie

5. Nemesis by Agatha Christie. Miss Marple gets a letter asking her to investigate a forgotten crime. But the man who wrote it is already dead! (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Marric

6. Gideon's Fog by J. J. Marric. The kidnap victim is not only Commander Gideon's assistant, he's also engaged to Gideon's daughter. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Creasey (as Ashe)

7. A Shadow of Death by Gordon Ashe. Patrick Dawlish of Scotland Yard searches for a vanished nuclear physicist and a critical piece of radioactive waste. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

Charteris

8. Catch the Saint by Leslie Charteris. Two Simon Templar yarns—in which he matches wits with a swindler turned kidnapper, then takes on Philadelphia's "boss of bosses." (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Simenon

9. Maigret and the Black Sheep by Georges Simenon. A rich man is murdered and his family all have tight alibis. But Inspector Maigret thinks they know more than they're telling. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

Morice

10. Nursery Tea and Poison by Ann Morice. Her latest Tessa Price adventure. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

O'Donnell

11. The Baby Merchants by Lillian O'Donnell. The husband-and-wife detective team of Nora and Joe Capretto suspect a connection between an adoption racket and narcotics traffic. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Garfield

12. Death Sentence by Brian Garfield. Having left New York at the end of **Death Wish,** Paul Benjamin (Charles Bronson in the movie) reopens his one-man war against crime in Chicago. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

Francis

13. High Stakes by Dick Francis. Race horse owner Steven Scott is swindled by his jockey and his bookie in a braintwisting tale of intrigue and deceit. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Queen

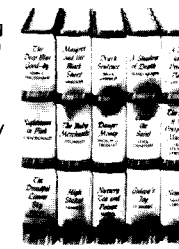
14. A Fine and Private Place by Ellery Queen. The clues point to the victim's young wife—or do they? (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Eberhart

15. Danger Money by Mignon G. Eberhart. Half in love with her boss, the heroine is in danger when his wife is murdered. 49th and latest thriller by the "Queen" of suspense. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Please enroll me as a member and send at once the 5 triple-volumes shown at the right, containing 15 mysteries. I enclose *no money now.* I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all 5 triple-volumes for the special new member price of only $1 (plus postage and handling) or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive the Club's monthly *Preview* which describes my next selections, but I am not obligated to accept them; I will always have at least 10 days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book at the Club's expense for full credit. For each monthly 3-in-1 selection I keep, I will send you only $3.89 (plus postage and handling). I may cancel my membership at any time.



The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576

Name _____ 6-EW

Street _____

City _____ 50-6A

State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Ontario; offer slightly different in Canada.

Use this postpaid card to get $98.80 worth of mysteries for only $1.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

15 BEST-SELLING MYSTERIES FOR JUST $1

Worth $98.80 in Publishers' Editions!

First Class
Permit No. 7
Roslyn, N.Y.

(See other side for further details.)

Business Reply Mail
No postage stamp necessary
if mailed in the United States

Postage Will Be Paid By

The Detective Book Club
Roslyn, New York 11576

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED